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ABSTRACT

This collection of papers is intended to provide adult educators and administrators information that will assist in making decisions about, initiating, financing, and evaluating adult literacy programs in England. Papers in the first part of the book focus on definitions of adult literacy, examining the dimensions of the problem, the potential impact of a British Broadcasting Company television series of motivational programs on the subject, and the role of colleges in meeting community needs. In the second part, a detailed study is made of four on-going projects, one based on the Liverpool LEA, the second a college-based scheme at South Trafford College of Further Education, the third a departmental scheme based on the Department of Adult Studies at Newton-le-Willows College of Further Education, the fourth based on an Adult Education Centre in North Trafford. The third part is concerned with the need for an understanding of the sociological and psychological background of students and their implications for diagnosis, placement, and the selection of resource materials. It includes a paper on the training of tutors. In the final part focus is on what those initiating programs can gain from the experience of projects in other contexts. Two of these papers deal with the vital necessity for resources to be committed to research, and the potential power of the public libraries in consolidating the teaching which is to be done in the near future. (ML)

# The Adult Illiterate in the Community

Editor: R. J. Kedney







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# Foreword

No longer can our national representatives 'hang their heads in modesty' as they report that the United Kingdom has no problem of illiteracy amongst adults. The halcyon days of the 1964 UNESCO World Conference have passed, for in the last decade we have become sensitive to a hidden problem that has yet to be properly identified. We are, however, beginning to recognise a major educational need in the community, one that is being identified as having a history of inability on the part of providers to formulate any effective solution.

Post-school education has been characterised in recent decades by its ability to adapt its form to the evolving needs of a rapidly changing society. The challenge of adult literacy throws down a gauntlet before further education colleges and adult education centres that challenges their meaningful role in the community. The taunts of narrow-minded, vocationalism on the one hand and dilettante activities on the other need to be met again as an educational issue of fundamental importance is thrust forward into the consciousness of society.

Early in the frenetic preparations for the Autumn of 1975, the Bolton College of Education (Technical), through its Extension Studies Unit, provided a valuable opportunity for the consideration of the thoughts and experiences of workers who have been concerned with developing literacy projects. This collection of papers is drawn from that course and extends the lectures and workshop activities. My thanks are due to the authors for their valued contributions, to the College of Education (Technical) for the course and publication, and in particular to Ken Dixon and Audrey Warburton of the Extension Studies Unit without whose efforts, advice and forbearance this publication would not have been possible.

**R. J. Kedney**

# Contents

# Part One

# Introduction

# Rationale and Outline

K. Dixon

The growing demand in the field of adult literacy will undoubtedly receive added impetus from the series of motivational programmes to be shown on BBC TV this autumn. Local education authorities, colleges and voluntary agencies will be faced with the problem of expanding provision at a time when all the demands are for stringency and maintenance of the status quo if not for reduction. The Adult Literacy Resource Agency, through its administration of the £1mi grant aid, will give very welcome and much needed financial support, but before a literacy project can be initiated there are many critical decisions to be made. The primary aim of this collection of papers is to provide information that will both assist in the making of such decisions, and also give advice on the on-going administration and evaluation of projects.

Before determining any move in this field, one must survey definitions of adult literacy, examine the dimensions of the problem, come to some understanding of the potential impact of the BBC TV series, and realise the extent to which the colleges should and can meet the needs of the communities they serve. Such a study forms the first part of the collection.

The importance of ensuring that correct decisions are made from the outset of a literacy project is underlined by the characteristics of the potential students. They are likely to be highly tutor-dependent and to have low levels of tolerance of stress, thus making subsequent changes both difficult and stressful. Yet because rigidity can cause problems, the decision making is complicated by the wide range of non-traditional options in terms of structure that are available and essential. Currently there is very little expertise in the field of adult literacy generally, and in particular there is a lack of extensive exploration of the implications of decisions in practice In the second part, therefore, a detailed study is made of four on-going projects; one based on the Liverpool LEA, the second a college-based scheme at South Trafford College of Further Education, the third a departmental scheme based on the Department of Adult

Studies at Newton-le-Willows College of Further Education, the fourth based on an Adult Education Centre in North Trafford. Of course, decisions need to be particular and localised, and, therefore, the case studies are offered as bases for the analysis of general principles rather than models for imitating.

The third part is concerned with the need for an understanding of the sociological and psychological background of students and their implications for diagnosis, placement and the selection of resource materials. Particularly attention needs to be focussed upon the management factors that impinge directly on these three areas of decision making. Whatever decisions are made with regard to the structure of a project, success will be largely dependent on the competent and effective training of tutors. At its first meeting, the Management Committee of the Adult Literacy Resource Agency saw such training as of the greatest priority. This part therefore contains an important paper on the training of tutors.

There are presently some 700 adult literacy instruction programmes operating in England, provided by statutory bodies and voluntary agencies. In the final part of this collection, the aim is to see what those about to initiate a programme can gain from the experience of projects in other contexts. Some of the voluntary agencies, through their successes, have demonstrated the need for flexibility of provision, whilst in another context the Army at its School of Preliminary Education has developed a programme that is probably one of the most effective models of a planned systematic approach. Two final papers deal with the vital necessity for resources to be committed to research, and the potential power of the public libraries in consolidating the teaching which is to be done in the near future.

# Adult Illiteracy

**Professor Michael D. Stephens**

"A theory of instruction is a political theory in the proper sense that it derives from consensus concerning the distribution of power within the society - who should be educated and to fulfil what roles? The psychologist or educationalist who formulates pedagogical theory without regard to the political, economic, and social setting of the educational process courts triviality and merits being ignored in the community and in the classroom. "[1]

Although there is now much interest in adult illiteracy our national contribution to the literature within the field has been modest. Britain has had other educational priorities which seemed more pressing so that we could report to UNESCO in 1964 "while there is very little real illiteracy some instances are occasionally found in prisons and Borstals and in the armed services, as well as amongst immigrants; cases of semi-literacy are rather more common."[2] Our complacency was surprising in that such authorities as the late Sir Cyril Burt had stated in 1945 that in his test of young men and women up to the age of 25 years crude illiterates numbered some 1½ to 2% and functional illiterates 15 to 20%. This figure had been confirmed by the experience of the military during the Second World War and by the US Army which found 10·8% of those accepted as recruits needed literacy classes.

From the late 1960's there have been a number of pioneer studies on adult illiteracy by such individuals and agencies as the National Association for Remedial Education, Michael Haviland and the University of Reading, the British Association of Settlements, the Merseyside and District Institute of Adult Education etc. Despite its terms of reference excluding adult illiteracy, the Bullock Report[3] devotes Chapter 19 to the subject and makes 17 recommendations relating to it. There is a growing British literature, but, despite cultural differences and the importance of sub-cultures in any culture, a subject like adult literacy must look to other countries for more advanced research findings. This paper largely draws upon American and UNESCO sources.

## The Importance of Literacy

A quotation from the American educationalist R. Callaway does much to place a practical slant on our increasing national interest in the illiterate adult. "to put it simply, the good guys can read; the bad guys cannot. . . . Reading has been identified as a critical element in social mobility. . . . It does not seem to matter whether reading is necessary; it is simply required to get up the ladder. . . . This situation might be described as 'the reading ethic' - a sort of cultural elitism which means you are a second class citizen if you cannot read". Despite the Marshall McLuhan possibility of less use of the printed word, the important reality is that society expects its citizens to be literate and tends to reward them according to such criteria.

British society assumes that the ability of an individual to manage his life, and to play a productive part in the economy, and to participate in the community is considerably influenced by the extent that he or she has been exposed to, and has absorbed, the advantages of education. The Bullock Report puts it succinctly, "modern society assumes an ability to handle print".[4] It is perhaps easier to teach the adult illiterate to read and write than to change the attitudes which prevail in society.

Functional literacy is a much broader concept than literacy and includes such ideas as that of being reasonable, of being a good citizen and of using common sense. As J. E. Williams has stated, "In contrast to previous generations, an individual who fails in school fails in Life".

## The Implications of Adult Illiteracy for Society and for the Individual

Literacy, and especially that which relates to work, is usually expected to produce several economic benefits such as improving productivity. Increased productivity should reduce costs and raise profits which may be expected to improve the Gross National Product with the attendant rise in tax revenue and less dependence on imports. Whether this proves to be true or not may be of less importance than that it is believed to be true. In 1971 the U.S. Board of Fundamental Education stated that "economists have estimated that the 42 million Americans (about 10 million of whom are thought to be fundamentally illiterate) in the work force who have not finished high school could add as much as 100,000 million dollars to the GNP if they became more productive workers as a result of increased education". What can be said is that the climate of opinion means that the illiterate is everywhere more likely to be unemployed than the literate adult whether the job concerned really demands literacy or not. Similarly, the illiterate worker can expect to be less well paid during his working life than his literate counterpart.

Again, functional literacy is expected to improve the entire context of family life, whether it is in family planning, health, budgeting, or civic responsibilities. What is an irrefutable fact is that a modest advance in the educational standards of the parents usually means a major advance in that of their children with associated benefits such as less school truancy.

Much of our present thinking about adult literacy has been aided by the teachings of Paulo Freire. Freire sees literacy education as a process whereby the illiterate becomes aware of his own potential and views literacy as a means of liberating such powers. With increasing literacy comes a change in the learner's self-image and his view of his role within society. This latter theme is taken up by the Bullock Report, "what the failing reader most needs is the encouragement which will change his image of himself".[5]

Reading and learning to read are pleasurable and personally useful acts. Perhaps we are in danger of a total commitment to 'trained' manpower rather than 'educated' citizens. Often the tutor of adult illiterates is seen by his or her students as a technologist concerned with reading achievement as an end in itself. They see a fellow adult who seems obsessed with correctly associated sounds and symbols but appears to have little concern for the uses of the skill. Education will always be much more than that. "We must educate for empathy, compassion, trust, non-exploitiveness, non-manipulativeness, for self-growth and self-esteem, for tolerance of ambiguity, for acknowledgement of error, for patience, for suffering".[6]

**Conclusion**

In our anxiety to meet with slim resources the appetites we are awakening we are in danger of taking some short-term views regarding adult literacy. The brave gesture of the government in providing a million pounds for the field is wholly admirable, but might have better come as £200,000 p.a. over five years with greater time for proper planning; at the end of such a period any administration with a compassion for its less fortunate citizens might find it possible to continue such a modest sum indefinitely.

We seem understandably absorbed with teaching illiterates and semi-literates to read and write, but often ignore the great truth that the newly acquired skill itself may be lost without a comprehensively planned follow-up programme.

We need a national network of adult literacy centres. Although much of the pioneer and continuing work in the field will be done by other institutions the most likely centres for a national network are the colleges of further education. As institutions they are not without honour in terms of a history of flexibility in meeting new needs, are not associated with the school system and the adult illiterates' sense of failure, there is a truly national network typified by high quality plant and at present some slack in the system, and such colleges have unparalleled contacts with the community and industry. The U.S. Basic Adult Education programme has found that teaching people to read and write is only the beginning of the process and we may eventually find ourselves also helping in such areas as placing the unemployed illiterate in work. The colleges of further education suggest an unbeatable base for such activities.

A final point to make is the need for a multi-agency approach to the field. Personal and institutional 'empires' will need to go. Real co-operation will need to be more than a casual 'phone conversation twice yearly between the local education authority and the social services department. This, however, has to be seen in the framework of the Bullock Committee's statement that "The major contribution will continue to rest with the local authority".[7]

**References**


1 *Jerome Bruner "Saturday Review" 18 May 1968.*

2 *Ministry of Education "Literacy and Education for Adults" UNESCO 1964 (p 164).*

3 *Bullock Report "A Language for Life" HMSO 1975.*

4 *Ibid (p 277).*

5 *Ibid (p 281).*

6 *"Alternative Educational Futures in the United States and Europe", OECD 1972 (p 201).*

7 *Bullock Report (p 281).*

# The Nature and Dimensions of the Problem

R. J. Kedney

The paper that follows attempts to consider the following three simple, but nevertheless fundamental, questions:-

(i) What is literacy?

(ii) How literate is literate?

and (iii) How many adults are illiterate?

In so doing, evidence and comment gathered from a search of the literature is collated and classified in an endeavour to explore some of the issues posed by the questions.

## What is Literacy?

Such a simple, and yet such a fundamental question concerning an activity which we are told is central to so much educational activity and the patterns of our lives, must surely have led by now to a clear response by which practitioners can be guided. A review of any standard work will produce at least one such definition, and often several, and a survey of the literature spoils one for choice. Whilst all such definitions share a common concern with aspects of verbal communication, they also produce a number of significant differences and degrees of depth. It would seem that potential providers of tuition for illiterate adults are faced with having to make decisions, not only about matters concerning structures, students, staffing and materials, but also, more fundamentally, about defining basic terms of reference.

It is perhaps not surprising that when J. L. Johns asked children "what is reading?", the range of responses he received illustrated a wide variety of concepts. The working definitions provided by tutors of illiterate adults[1] are equally as varied and lend support to Johns' view that "it is readily apparent that children, like teachers, need to acquire a better

[illegible] of reading."[3] When he interviewed severely disabled readers he found a lack of understanding of the nature of purpose of the reading process and he feels "one of the contributing factors to [illegible]ding problems is a failure of some children to understand [illegible]ved in the reading process."[3] This surely can be no less important for illiterate adults, their tutors, or for those who organise [illegible]uch tuition.

In an effort therefore to divine some guidance from the experts, a literature search has been carried out and, whilst the perspectives offered differ both in terms of the nature of the process and of standards, they do tend to share some themes. Karlsen,[4] in considering large scale assessment of literacy, built the following model based on three groups:

1. The literacy rate approach, which is concerned with the expression of a proportion of a given population as literate through some tangible definition such as years of schooling.

2. The behavioural objectives approach, which involves the statement of literacy in detailed terms as behavioural outcomes which can be evaluated through student performance.

3. The normative approach, which is based on norms established through an assessment of current levels of attainment of discrete groups and expressed as grades or quotients related to the age of the school groups.

An alternative division using the following classification has been adopted here for definitions of the term literacy, and as the basis for Appendices A to D.

1. Statements couched in quantitative terms, be they in terms of years of schooling or reading attainment. (Appendix A).

2. Statements based on tasks requiring literacy skills, expressed in either specific (Appendix B) or in general terms (Appendix C).

3. Statements concerned with an analysis of the operations involved. (Appendix D).

However, as Karlsen notes, whilst each form of definition offers valuable guidance, each also has significant limitations, and adoption or development based on any selected working definition needs to take account of its strengths and weaknesses in the uses it is to be put to. In the review of the three major forms outlined below, each is briefly illustrated; further examples are given in the appendices.

*Statements couched in quantitative terms*

These statements have adopted either years of schooling or attainment on standardised tests, the results of which are expressed as reading ages drawn from the levels achieved by the average children in the sample from which the norms are drawn. An example of the former is given by Stauffer as the yardstick adopted by the U.S. Bureau of Census. "To be counted as an illiterate in this survey the respondent must first have declared himself to have completed less than the sixth grade in school and stated that he cannot read or write a simple message in any language."[5]

Attendance at school is, of itself, an inferior measure of literacy attainment as is evidenced by the numbers of illiterate adults in this country and by the findings of the Woodlawn (Chicago) study where only 6·6% of the sample had not completed the sixth grade at school, yet 50·7% were shown to be functionally illiterate when tests were administered.[6]

Reading tests which focus on aspects of attainment in selected areas of skill and standardised on child or adolescent populations are adopted by some in establishing terms of reference. The Ministry of Education used one such measure, the Watts-Vernon test, which consists of 35 questions on two sides of foolscap which have to be completed in ten minutes, thus giving some measure of comprehension skills. In 1950, the Ministry defined illiterate readers as "those whose reading age (regardless of chronological age) is less than 7·0 years" and semi-literate readers as "those whose reading age is 7·0 years or greater, but less than 9·0 years."[7] In recent years the N.S.6 Test has replaced the earlier Watts-Vernon Test. It is similar in nature, and the Bullock Report has argued that it, in turn, should be replaced by a new, more widely based battery of tests.

Though these tests provide some definitive measure, they are not without their critics, for they only assess narrow, isolated elements of skill, are standardised on children, and often state standards in reading ages related to children. How far, for example, can the ability to sound correctly words in isolation, such as 'enigma' or 'somnambulist' on a word recognition test, the selection of words to complete sentences, or filling in a crossword, identify an individual as being literate, or illiterate?

*Statements based on tasks expressed in specific terms*

Functional literacy is sometimes defined in terms of stated tasks, such as reading newspapers or completing forms. Such views of literacy are clearly attractive in that they relate directly to the uses of literacy in real-life situations and, through the specification of items, criterion-referenced tests can be developed. Such statements range from the simple statement used by UNESCO in 1951:

"A person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, single statement on his everyday life."[8]

through to the extensive research and development work carried out by Louis Harris and Associates Inc. for the National Reading Center, Washington D.C.9 - see Appendix B. However, whilst such definitions have relevance and application to adults and their use of literacy skills, it is clearly necessary to establish meaningful and reliable norms both in terms of the adult population and in terms of literacy skills.

*Statements based on functional tasks expressed in general terms*

The extensive range of potential uses for literacy in our modern, complex society makes any limited selection of tasks difficult, and some definitions are therefore couched in general terms. Such functional definitions would seem to originate from the Second World War and have changed with an increasing recognition of the complexity of needs. Compare for example, the Ministry of Education's statement in 1950 which equated literacy with being "able to read and write for practical purposes in daily life"[10] with Griffith and Cunningham's statement:

"The following three-part definition is proposed for Adult Basic Education. Adult Basic Education is education that results in the acquisition of communication and computational skills equivalent to that which is considered adequate for one who has completed twelve years of formal schooling; focusses on developing skills as citizens, consumers and participants in the family; and contributes to improving the quality of life styles of the students."[11]

Such broad statements, whilst recognising the width of literacy functions and giving some indication as to standards, can tend to be too broad to provide effective guidance to potential action.

*Statements concerned with an analysis of the operations involved*

Any definition which endeavours to summarise the complex operations involved in literacy skills with any degree of brevity must commit considerable sins of omission. It would, however, recognise the broad areas of skill and consciously include, or exclude, reading, or reading and writing (and with them spelling), or all three Rs, or indeed the broad spectrum of Adult Basic Education adopted by the Americans in an endeavour to place literacy in a meaningful context of life styles and skills. The nature of reading is extensively explored by authors such as Ruth Strang,[12] Merritt,[13] and Robinson.[14] Appendix D offers elements of one such approach in Goodman's comments and makes two other brief comments on defining literacy.

Endeavours, therefore, to establish terms of reference through some definition of literacy would seem to need to take account of a number of factors. They should be concerned with the nature of literacy, both as a complex collection of learnt processes and skills and as a tool to be used. Brown's study of the reading interests of illiterate adults, linked to a study of what we as literate adults use our skills for in our daily life, and the points of contact of illiterate adults with literature, would add further dimensions. These, together with an identification of standards and tools of measurement, may provide significant ingredients in such a mix.

Lewis suggests that "We have to find our own definitions. It is clear that what society means by 'illiteracy' depends upon the importance of literacy in that society".[15] The management of imperfection can surely be lessened to some degree by moving from the current woolliness so often implicit in the use of terms such as communications and literacy. Perspectives such as those outlined by Harman[16] in his analysis of literacy, as a tool of conceptualisation, as a measure of attainment, and as practical application of the skills in meaningful activities for the learner, offer one such potential avenue. In any event, decisions have to be made based on some conception of literacy, be it arrived at through conscious deliberation or unthinking optimism. Whilst the above, and the accompanying appendices, may serve to illustrate the lack of an existing, widely accepted, single definition which will meet the range of needs of decision-makers, the range of statements provides evidence of considerable thought and analysis.

If there is no simple answer to the simple question posed at the outset, there is nevertheless a fundamental need for careful consideration of the implications and limitations of the adoption of working terms of reference. Decision-making and consequent action will serve to identify further the nature of the activity should participants be prepared to enquire, formulate questions and seek for answers.

### How literate is literate?

The foregoing discussion on defining literacy raised questions of what adults read, or need to read, and what levels are necessitated if adults are to function effectively and independently. The development of the National Reading Difficulty Index in the U.S.A. by Louis Harris and Associates Inc.[17] represents one such major research project based upon such an approach. Whilst the literacy needs of individuals undoubtedly vary considerably, the Harris survey took as a basic guideline a central block of literacy tasks such as an application for a driver's licence, unemployment benefits and classified advertisements, as the basis for generalisations related to life in North America today.

Existing definitions of literacy serve to identify some key items of written material such as newspaper articles, printed instructions and street names. A survey of the problems encountered by illiterate students would no doubt extend such a check-list of criteria, which could also be extended further by the maintenance of daily logs of contacts with written material by literate adults. From such a catalogue of commonly-met items, key elements could then be selected, based on a model of analysis such as that developed by Merritt.[18]

The application of readability formulae, which are based upon sentence and word length, give some measure of reading difficulty when applied to passages of prose. Davies, in his work for the Open University, used the FOG Index.[19] The British Association of Settlements FORCAST,[20] Atkinson and Gains used Dale-Spach[21] and N.F.E.R. are using Fry's Readability Graph.[22] Whilst the findings of each are said to be statistically reliable and comparable with each other and are expressed in terms of reading grades or ages, they are not, however, directly comparable with the findings of tests applied to students.

A cursory survey of commonly-met items, see Appendix E, indicates clearly the limitations of many statements of literacy, calling as they do for reading attainment levels at least equal to that proposed by UNESCO of a reading age of thirteen. In only one instance, that of a book of cartoons, does the level fall to that stated by the Ministry of Education in 1950. The limited evidence that is available clearly supports the setting of standards equating to those reached by the average child midway through his secondary schooling as the target to be aimed for. Without such a level of attainment the student would find it difficult to continue to use newly-acquired skills in everyday situations.

Gray[23] suggested that the danger of regression of standards back into illiteracy may indeed be serious if students are not able to continue to practise their skills independently. Lewis,[24] in comparing Burt's pre-war findings with the results gained by Watts and Vernon, was less certain but agreed that able, practising readers increased their levels of skills in early adulthood.

The preceding observations have focussed, in essence, on the cognitive elements of the development of literacy skills in order to meet the demands created by what might be termed as survival needs. Little account would seem to have been taken of Moyle's third objective of enjoying reading,[25] though claims are often made for literacy being the key to a rich, cultural heritage. Studies such as Asheim's in the U.S.A.,[26] N.F.E.R.[27] and Mann[28] in this country, indicate that large numbers are disinclined to use their skills, or as Luckham shows, even to own books.[29]

The three objectives set by Moyle[30] for teaching children would seem equally applicable to adults, (i) to give sufficient skill to ensure independence in reading, (ii) an ability to evaluate what is read, and (iii) enjoyment in reading. Some study of the reading interests and needs of illiterate adults, of the reading habits of literate adults and of the standards necessary to overcome everyday literature and potential regression problems, may provide indicators to meeting the challenges posed by Moyle if adult literacy is to be achieved.

**How many adults are illiterates?**

If the question had been posed to Professor Job he would no doubt have first demanded to know what was meant by the term, for any calculation must be dependent upon its terms of reference. Estimates of the numbers of illiterate adults vary according to the standard adopted and to the source from which they are drawn. It is unlikely, as Williams suggests,[31] that any national survey will ever be attempted and hence figures have to be based on abstractions from limited studies with limited populations. A number of such surveys are tabulated below; in general, studies exclude such groups as the mentally handicapped, the mentally ill, immigrants and the special school population where illiteracy is likely to be high. The samples studied tend rather to focus on groups that are easily contacted such as school-leavers, army entrants or the prison population, and even with due allowance for the excluded groups they can hardly be taken as representative of the adult population.

The tabulation (see Appendix F) of the projections from the selected samples for assessment needs to be treated with extreme caution, for the problems of extrapolation from a limited target population to a wider, and different group, is but one limiting factor. When considering the studies made by local authorities of reading standards in schools for similar groups of children Jessie Reid noted the following reservations on any comparisons:

1. Different criteria of reading ability were adopted; individual tests of word recognition in some areas, group tests of reading comprehension in others.
2. The borderlines chosen to ascertain backwardness were inconsistent; in some cases a reading quotient below 80 or 85 was chosen, in others the criterion was based on the relation between attainment and mental age.
3. The terms 'retardation' and 'backwardness' were used ambiguously.
4. In some cases reading and intelligence tests which were not similarly standardised were used.

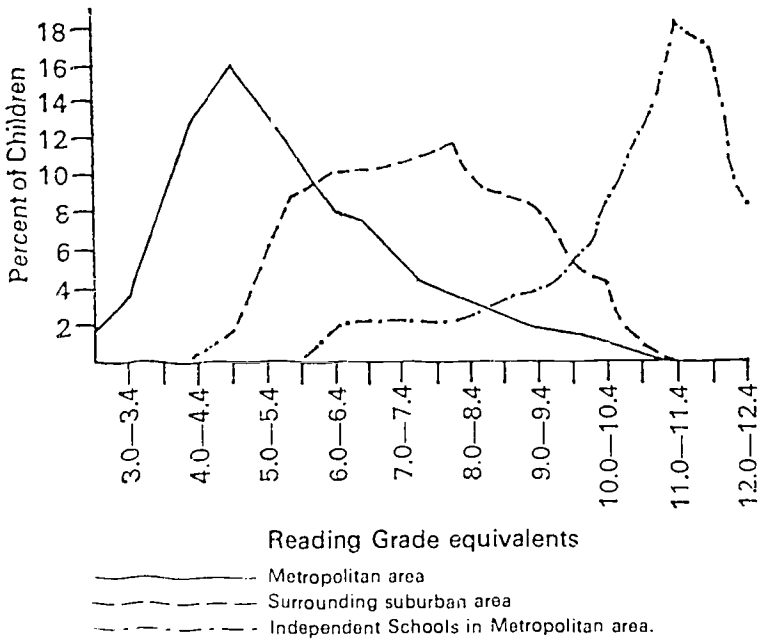
5. There was considerable variety in the sampling methods used, and in the ages and sexes of testees.
6. The tests used were differently normed and constructed and were not always consistently applied.

". . . For the reasons already outlined, local estimates varied a good deal and naturally were not representative of conditions over the country as a whole."[32]

Whilst national surveys would seem to meet to some degree at least some of the criticisms, they are themselves not without severe limitations. The last such major survey carried out by Start and Wells[33] for the Department of Education and Science in 1971 concerned itself again with fifteen year old school-leavers, but, as the authors clearly acknowledge in their report, it met with severe sampling problems. Whilst the problems of the postal strike of that year, the non-return of results by some schools, and the high proportion of Easter school-leavers, severely reduced the range of the sample, the ensuing results did offer some comparison with previous findings based on the Watts-Vernon Sentence Completion Test; how far they can be extended from the selected sample of fifteen year old school leavers to the adult population is questionable.

Marked variations within such broad samples would seem to be suggested by, for example, the high incidence of illiteracy found amongst young offenders, or the regional variations in state returns in the U.S.A. noted by Angelica Cass, e.g., Utah 3% and Louisiana 13%.[34] Perhaps the most graphic illustration is that used by Vernon[35] when he used the following graph (Page 17) from Eisenberg's study to indicate the significance of socio-economic class in relationship to reading attainment amongst children.

Whilst the evidence cited clearly counsels caution when considering the limited results of surveys, particularly as they have in this instance to be extrapolated from other age ranges to the adult population, they do provide what little evidence is currently available. There would seem to be some broad agreement between the studies when broad levels of literacy attainment are considered; for example, the totally illiterate are likely to be relatively small in numbers (c. 1% or less) amongst those who have been educated in this country. This, however, takes no account of the immigrant population, both recent and immediately post-war, whose native languages may be Asian and Central European, and those who either attended special schools, were declared ineducable or due to illness or truancy missed much of their schooling in this country.




The proportions classified by some as semi-literate, that is having a reading age attainment equivalent on a standardised test from 7 to 9 years, from the samples listed, range from 2% to 9% of the adult population. The surveys in the United States show a similar range. The findings for the next ability band, classified as backward - reading ages 9 to 12 years old - fall within the range 10% to 30% of the adult population depending on the samples quoted. Here again, the findings in the U.S.A. are similar. At their upper level they are also parallelled by the limited studies carried out amongst samples of students in colleges of further education.

It is clear that, whatever standard of literacy is adopted, other than that of total illiteracy, the problem is one of considerable dimensions. If, due to both local and national efforts - including the major BBC project - providers of literacy tuition succeed in raising the level of successful provision to that necessary to meet needs equivalent to the numbers of illiterate school leavers each year, they will need massively to increase existing resources. In a local authority the size of Bolton, population c.260,000, if the comparatively low figure of 7½% is adopted, some 600

adults would need to complete successfully their courses each year in order to maintain the status quo. This far exceeds any current level of provision, and yet it would seem that the size of the problem is probably greater amongst school leavers, and that it takes no account of factors such as disrupted schooling for some adults in the war years, leavers from special schools, immigrant adults or the mentally handicapped.

## Conclusion

Whilst it is clearly premature to talk of any conclusions in a field where it would seem possible to muster evidence and comment adequate only to highlight the absence of firm conclusions, certain observations are possible. Much of the foregoing accepts the view expressed by Gray when he said that "intensive studies supply clear evidence that there is no substitute for reading in meeting many personal and social needs".[36] Such a view would seem to be shared by one of the most highly motivated groups of students, those currently attending for tuition in Basic English.

If the development of a meaningful definition of literacy, which will serve as an effective basis for reference and decision-making, is yet to come, the necessity for clarity of purpose in planning is here now. Woolly minded optimism, dressed as liberalism and meeting the individual needs of each student, can be no substitute for clarity in meeting the demands of any curriculum needed to meet such high aims. The needs of each student can best be met if some rationale is established and criteria stated, as has been done, for example, by the Training, Research and Development Station, Saskatchewan.[37] At the very least, the implications arising from decisions as to whether providers are concerned with the first R, two, or all three Rs, Communications Skills or Adult Basic Education, need to be grasped in literacy terms. The equally oft-stated aims of "developing the whole person", of "improving social skills", or of "raising the self worth of the illiterate adult", raise a battery of issues outside the context of this paper.

The suggestion has been made that perhaps we should be concerned with raising reading standards above the level where regression is a danger, to a point where adults can read the everyday materials they meet. It should then be possible for them to have some choice in what they wish to read; the development of positive attitudes towards literature is a different question. Asheim suggests that "about three-fourths of the books that are read are read by less than 5 per cent of the adult population".[38] When this is compared with Gray's view that "it is apparent that at least half of our adult population is able to read at the ninth grade level or above",[39] it would seem that we have a problem of a different dimension and less experience on which to draw.

Gray goes on to state that "as shown by numerous readability studies, much of the serious reading material published today ranks above the ninth grade in difficulty. Before adults of average reading ability can read widely and interpret such materials critically, they must acquire increased reading efficiency. This is true also if they are to have ready access to much of our literary heritage."[4] A parallel relationship between such standards and the uses of literacy skills would seem to be indicated in this country, so our objectives too need to take account of the intended purpose of such skills as we intend to inculcate.

So much of the foregoing has centred upon reading, to the exclusion of other aspects of literacy, in the main because much of the current evidence and comment concerns the development of reading. However, any shift from basic skills to consideration of cultural or creative elements can quickly place writing in the forefront. Whilst the survival demands on writing for many may be few (or are they?), at the creative level they can become significant, but this is to return to questioning the nature of literacy.

An ex-colleague in the Prison Education Service used to joke in times of falling student numbers or financial hardship that his classes would never be short of customers. If we accept the evidence as to the levels of need for literacy skills and current patterns of attainment, this would seem equally true in the field of adult literacy, even after assuming that half or three-quarters of those lacking functional skills do not want, or will not come forward for, tuition. 1984 seems at the moment to point towards increasing demands for such skills rather than, as McLuhan suggests, an audio-visual wonderland. One is left with thoughts about the nature of such literacy skills and whether they have some intrinsic value peculiar to reading and writing, or indeed whether our decisions should focus rather on McLuhan's vision and the removal of the need for such high level skills. Is the pen mightier than the transistor, or is the latter just another means of communicating with words?

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3 *Ibid Page 19.*

4 *Dr. B. Karlsen - "Methods of Large Scale Literacy Assessment" - Literacy Discussion, Vol. IV, No. 3, 1973 - IIALM UNESCO.*

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[36] *W. S. Gray - "How well do Adults read?" - in "Adult Reading" - ed. N. B. Henry - Nat. Society for the Study of Education 1956, Page 31.*
[37] *Training, Research and Development Station - "Theory and Methods of the Blade Program" - Dept. of Manpower and Immigration, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1973.*
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[39] *W. S. Gray - op. cit. Page 51.*
[40] *Ibid.*

## Appendix A

### Definitions of literacy using quantitative terms

*Reading Ages:*

[1] *Ministry of Education - Pamphlet No. 18 - 'Reading Ability - Some suggestions for Helping the Backward Reader'. HMSO 1950.*
Illiterate readers are "those whose reading age (regardless of chronological age) is less than 7·0 years. (This figure differs from Burt's 6½ years merely because the reading test did not readily measure the 6½ year level)".
Semi-literate readers are "those whose reading age is 7·0 or greater but less than 9·0 years".
Backward readers are "those whose reading ages are more than 20% below their chronological ages: in the case of children whose reading quotients are below 80. In the case of adults the expected reading age may be taken as 15·0 years, hence backward readers are those with reading ages below 12·0 years".
(Norms based on the Watts-Vernon sentence completion test - 35 items on 2 sides of foolscap - completed in 10 minutes).

2 *Sir Cyril Burt* - "*The Backward Child*" - *University of London Press, 1961 - 5th edition.*
Illiterate — R.A. of less than 6½ years.
Functionally illiterate — R.A. of 6½ years to 9 years.

3 "*A Right to Read*" - *BAS 1974. Page 5.*
"UNESCO draws the line not at nine year old reading levels as English and Welsh research does, but thirteen year old reading levels".

*School Grades*

1 *U.S. Census 1960* - quot. by Angelica Cass. P.12.
Illiterates — non-completion of 3rd grade level.
Functional illiteracy — non-completion of 6th grade level.
BUT "However since 1960 completion of the eight grade has been used generally throughout the country by the U.S. Office of Education and public school officials as more realistic."

2 *UNESCO* - "In quantitative terms the standard of attainment in functional literacy may be equated to the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic achieved after a set number of years of primary or elementary schooling." Quoted by D. Harman "Illiteracy : An Overview" on "Reading: Today and Tomorrow" - ed. Amelia Melnik and J. Merritt - University of London, 1972.

3 *U.S. Bureau of Census 1964.* "To be counted as an illiterate in this survey the respondent must first have declared himself to have completed less than the sixth grade in school, and stated that he cannot read or write a simple message in any language."
Dr. J. Stauffer - "Illiteracy in the United States - The Move to Volunarism" Literacy Discussion Vol. IV. No. 3, Sept., 1973. HALM - UNESCO.

4 *U.S. Army* - *World War II* - The U.S. Army was the first to define functional literacy when during World War II it defined illiterates as 'persons who were incapable of understanding the kinds of written instructions that are needed for carrying out basic military functions or tasks. (Current Population Reports, 1963). The Army too set a fifth grade equivalency as its standard".
D. Harman - "Illiteracy: An Overview" - see above.

**Appendix B**

**Literacy defined in terms of specific tasks**

1 "A person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, single statement on his everyday life."
*UNESCO's Expert Committee on Standardisation of Educational Statistics (1951)*
quoted by D. Harman - "Illiteracy - An Overview" - Harvard "Educa-

tional Review, 1970 - 40 ii, in "Reading: Today and Tomorrow" - ed. Amelia Melnik and J. Merritt - University of London, 1972. P.350.

2a Army Personnel Selection Staff's criterion of illiteracy - "Those recruits who could not produce legible answers to the questionnaire or qualification form filled up on entry to the service" (World War II). *A. E. G. Pilliner & Jessie Reid - "The definition and measurement of reading problems"* in "Reading - Problems and Practices" - Jessie F. Reid - Ward Lock Ed., 1972.

2b "Some 311 (or about 0·3%) were, by Army standards, illiterate or nearly so (i.e., unable even with appreciable help to enter their personal particulars on an Army form)."
*Ministry of Education - Pamphlet No. 32 - "Standards of Reading, 1948 - 1956" - HMSO, 1957.*

2c "The U.S. Army was the first to define functional literacy when, during World War II, it defined illiterates as 'persons who were incapable of understanding the kinds of written instructions that are needed for carrying out basic military functions or tasks' (Current Population Reports, 1953). The Army too set a fifth grade equivalency as its standard."
*D. Harman - "Illiteracy - An Overview" in "Reading: Today and Tomorrow" ed. Amelia Melnik and J. Merritt - University of London, 1972.*

3a Completely illiterate - "those who cannot even sign their names" (I) or "one who is in his everyday life able to make no practical use whatever of reading or writing." (II).

3b Crudely illiterate - adults who "although not functionally literate could at any rate sign their names, write simple words spontaneously or to dictation, read isolated words, such as the names of streets, and interpret simple sentences." (I)
or Semi-literate - as one who is able to make no effective use of these activities, that is one who is debarred by his disability from using the ordinary machinery of a civilised country; (e.g., he will not be able to read with understanding a short paragraph in a newspaper, or write an intelligible letter home, or to comprehend simple printed instructions)." (II)
(I) *Sir Cyril Burt - "The Backward Child" - University of London 1961 - 5th edition.*
(II) *Sir Cyril Burt - "The Education of Illiterate Adults" - The British Journal of Educational Psychology, Volume XV, 1945, P.21*
both quoted by R. M. Haviland in "A survey of Provision for Adult Illiteracy in England" - Univ. of Reading, 1973.

4 Illiterate - "people for whom books and newspapers, printed instructions and directions, mean nothing".
Semi-literate - "find difficulty in reading even the simplest matter, who rarely write or read a letter because they cannot, and who must rely almost exclusively for their information on what they are told".
*F. J. Schonell - Times Educational Supplement - 23 February, 1946, P.87*
quoted by R. M. Haviland, Page 3.

5 "For the purposes of everyday living every person in a modern society needs to be able to read at the level, at least, of a simple paragraph in a popular newspaper, and he must be able to write a simple letter. In our society today this is the lowest level of effective or functional literacy."
*M. M. Lewis - "The Importance of Illiteracy" - Harrap 1953, Page 9*

6 "A useful standard of literacy implies that the pupil can make use of what he has learned without further help from the instructor. The test adopted for measuring satisfactory progress took the following form:

Reading: Reading with understanding a passage in the vernacular. The passage set should be self contained, so that it has complete meaning. The subject matter of the passage should be within the understanding and experience of the candidate. The language used should be in the idiom familiar to the candidate.
Writing: Writing a letter to a specific person containing specific information. The letter must be framed in the customary form, contain the sender's address, and his personal signature. An envelope must be prepared according to the accepted method and inscribed in such a way that the addressee is sure to receive it."

*Conference of Provincial Representatives - Zaria, Nigeria, 1950*
Report on a Conference of Provincial Representatives to discuss the Adult Literacy Campaign, Northern Region, 12 - 16 June, 1950
quoted by W. S. Gray - "The Teaching of Reading and Writing" - UNESCO/Evans 1956, Pages 21 - 22.

7 "In 1970 Louis Harris and Associates Inc. were commissioned by the National Reading Council, and in 1971, by the National Reading Center, to assess adult functional reading ability in the United States. Harris employed such practical testing instruments as application forms for public assistance, social security, bank loan, Medicaid, driver's licence, unemployment benefits, Selective Service, Federal Income Tax, U.S. Passport, credit card, U.S. Census forms, and classified advertisements for employment and housing. Also used were printed instructions for making a long distance telephone call, followed by questions based on the instructions.

*Dr. J. Stauffer - "Illiteracy in the United States - The Move to Voluntarism" Literacy Discussion - Vol. IV, No. 3, Sept., 1973 - HALM UNESCO.*

8 "Based on research to determine literacy requirements of Army jobs described above, it is clear that a reading level of grade 5·0 does not prepare a man for even the least technical Army jobs. In this case the minimal reading level for the four jobs was grade 7·0 for the Cook's job."
*T. G. Sticht - "Research towards the design, development and evaluation of a job-functional literacy training program for the U.S. Army" - in Literacy Discussion, Vol. IV, No. 3, Sept., 1973, HALM UNESCO.*

## Appendix C

### Literacy defined in terms of general functions

1 Literate - "Able to read and write for practical purposes in daily life" *Ministry of Education Pamphlet No. 18 - "Reading Ability : Some Suggestions for Helping the Backward Reader" - HMSO 1950.*

2 "The challenge is to foster through every means the ability to read, write and compute with the functional competence needed for meeting the requirements of adult living."

Conference on Strategies for Generating a National "Right to Read" - Adult movement, Raleigh, North Carolina, Jan. 22nd - 23rd, 1970 - quoted by D. Harman in *"Illiteracy: An Overview" in "Reading Today and Tomorrow" - ed. Amelia Melnik and J. Merritt - Univ. of London 1972. Page 351.*

3 "A person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture and group.
*W. S. Gray - "The Teaching of Reading and Writing" - UNESCO/ Evans 1956 ; page 24 - adopted by UNESCO in 1969.*

4 "A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development." UNESCO - 1962.
*Quoted by D. Harman in "Illiteracy: An Overview" - see above.*

5 "Functional literacy is the ability to hold a decent job, to support self and family and to lead a life of dignity and pride."
*U.S. Office of Education 1969.*

6 "A person is functionally literate when he has command of reading skills that permit him to go about his daily activities successfully on the job or to move about society normally with comprehension of the visual printed expressions and messages he encounters.
*The National Reading Center, Washington D.C. (1971) quoted by the British Association of Settlements 1974.*

7 "The following three part definition is proposed for Adult Basic Education. Adult Basic Education is education that results in the acquisition of communication and computational skills equivalent to that which is considered adequate for one who has completed twelve years of formal schooling; focusses on developing skills as citizens, consumers, and participants in the family; and contributes to improving the quality of life style of the students."
*W. S. Griffith and Phyllis M. Cunningham - The "Improvement of Teacher Training in Adult Basic Education - A Projective Appraisal" - in "Adult Basic Education - The State of the Art" - ed. W. S. Griffith and Ann Hayes - University of Chicago 1970.*

## Appendix D

### Other definitions of literacy

1 "To move us toward a definition of reading, it may help to list certain evident aspects of the process:

i Reading begins with graphic language in some form: print, script, etc.

ii The purpose of reading is the reconstruction of meaning. Meaning is not in print, but it is meaning that the author begins with when he writes. Somehow the reader strives to reconstruct this meaning as he reads.

iii In alphabetic writing systems there is a direct relationship between oral language and written language.

iv Visual perception must be involved in reading.

v Nothing intrinsic in the writing system or its symbols has meaning. There is nothing in the shape or sequence of any letters or grouping of letters which in itself is meaning.

vi Meaning is the mind of the writer and the mind of the reader.

vii Yet readers are capable through reading of constructing a message which agrees with the writer's intended message."

*K. S. Goodman - "Behind the Eye - What Happens in Reading" in "Reading: Today and Tomorrow" - ed. Amelia Melnik and J. Merritt Univ. of London 1972.*

2 "It would seem that not only must the College of Education student be taught to teach reading, but in many cases he must be taught to read."
*L. J. Chapman - "Reading Comprehension in a College of Education" Univ. of Reading, March, 1973.*

3 "Illiterates include persons who are able to read but not write. Persons who formerly knew how to read and write but were unable to do so at the time of the survey because of mental or physical impairment such as blindness, are classified as literate."
*U.S. Bureau of Census Reports.*

## Appendix E

### Reading materials in adult life

1 Classification and examples used by Professor Merritt of the Open University in his address to the first BAS Conference on adult illiteracy - 7th November, 1973.

| Home and Family | Employment | Consumers | Leisure | Community |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School reports | Job advertisements | Advertise-ments | Sports articles | Newspapers |
| Circulars | Application forms | Labels | Travel Agents' Lit. | Political leaflets |
| Health clinic leaflets | Trade union literature | Guarantees | Holiday insur-ance forms | Charity appeals |
| Rent books | Safety regulations | Credit conditions | Club rules | Property demolition |
| Insurance forms | Sick pay information | Discount literature | Reading for pleasure | Notices for new roads, etc. |
| National Health literature | Work notices | | | Com. Assoc. leaflets |
| Personal letters | | | | |
| D.I.Y. instructions | | | | |

Whilst some of the above are not written in prose form, and hence not assessable by existing readability measures others are and sample results are given overleaf.

## Readability Levels

| Reading Materials | Reading Ages | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| *Home and Family* | | |
| Free prescription leaflet | 13½ –> 17 + | British Assoc. of Settlements - "A Right to Read" |
| Family Income - Supplement leaflet | 14 –> 17 + | "A Right to Read" (FORCAST Test) |
| Family Allowance (for immigrants) | 13·6 –> 18·5 | Diploma Students, Edge Hill College (FRY) |
| Pastry packet instructions | 14 | "A Right to Read" |
| Batchelors Soups packets | 10 –> 17 | Edge Hill College of Education |
| *Employment* | | |
| Job advertisement | 15 | Author (Fry's Readability Graph) |
| Fire regulations | 15 + | Author |
| Income Tax Return Guide | 12·3 –> 18·5 | Edge Hill College of Education |
| Claims for industrial injuries | 10·7 –> 17·9 | do |
| National Insurance for Married Women | 10·5 –> 17 | do |
| *Consumers* | | |
| Advertisement | 13 + | Author |
| Disinfectant bottle label | 16 + | "A Right to Read" |
| "Free" offer leaflet | 12 + | Author |
| Feeding instructions - cat food | 12 + | Author |
| Open University brochure | 14 | Author |
| *Leisure* | | |
| Highway Code | 9·6 –> 14 | Edge Hill College of Education |
| Travel Agents' brochure | 13 + | Author |
| Sports page - Sun | 14 + | Author |
| Reading for pleasure - Georgette Heyer | 14 | Author |
| – Cowboy story | 10 | Author |
| – Charlie Brown | 7½ –> 8 | Author |
| *Community* | | |
| Newspapers - Sun | 14 + | "A Right to Read" (same story) |
| Times | 16½ | do |
| Daily Mirror | 16½ | do |
| Daily Express | 16½ | do |
| Times | 15 | A. Davies - "Printed Media and the Reader" O.U. |
| Daily Mirror | 13 | do |
| Daily Express | 15 | do |
| Charity leaflet | 14 + | Author |

## Appendix F

## Estimates of numbers of illiterate adults

U.K.

*(Illiterate, semi-literate, functionally illiterate and backward)*

| % | Category | Notes | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Illiterate | Sample of 3000 18 yr. olds - 1950 | Vernon & Watts - Reading Ability. HMSO 1951 |
| 1½-2 | Crude Illiterates | 16 to 25 years old - pre-war sample | Sir Cyril Burt - Reading Ability. HMSO 1951 |
| 3·6 | Reading Age 7-9 yrs. | Sample of 3000 18 yr. olds in the Forces | Vernon & Watts - Reading Ability. HMSO 1951 |
| 3·18 | do | Sample of 15 yr. olds - school leavers 1971 | DES Survey (based on Vernon Watts Test N.S.6. Test) |
| 4 | do | do 1956 | do |
| 5 | do | do 1952 | do |
| 6 | do | do 1948 | do |
| 5 | Illiterate | Extrapolated from 1971 survey above | R. M. Haviland - Survey of Provision |
| 6 | do | do | B.A.S. policy statement 1974 |
| 6 | do | do | Dr. Joyce Morris - Lecture to B.A.S. |
| 6 | do | do | Peter Clyne - evidence to Russell Report |
| 9 | Reading Age 6½ - 9 yrs. | Studies before and during the war 1945 | Sir Cyril Burt - Brit. Journal of Ed. Psychology |
| 9 | do | do | F. J. Schonell - based on Burt's study |
| 20 | Backward | DES Survey of sec. mod. school leavers 1961 | Quoted by Jessie Reid |
| 25 | do | do 1956 | do |
| 25 | do | Extrapolation | Dr. Joyce Morris - Guardian 1974 |
| 30 | do | DES Survey of sec. mod. school leavers 1952 | Quoted by Jessie Reid |
| 0·3 | Illiterate | Army National Service recruits 1955-6 | Standards of Reading 1948-56 HMSO 1957 |
| 2 | Illiterate | Army recruits in World War II | Prof. T. Kelly - "History of Adult Ed." |
| 5-10 | Backward | Regular Army recruits 1960 | Col. A. C. T. White |
| 17·4 | Illiterate | Young offenders in Senior Detention Centres | Diploma Dissertation study - Univ. of Nottingham 1973 |
| 26·1 | Backward etc. | Sec. school pupils in Manchester 1957 | S. Wiseman |
| 28 | Backward | College of FE students 1973 | ILEA |
| 36·8 | Backward | College of FE students | Mid Herts College of FE 1967 |

**Estimates of illiterate adults in other western societies**

| % | Category | Notes | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Illiterate | USA - 1960 census returns | Dr. J. Staulfer - based on schooling |
| 1·9 | Illiterate | USA - 1960 census extrapolation | Angelica Cass |
| 2·4 | Illiterate | USA - 1960 census return | D. Harman - little or no schooling |
| 5·8 | Funct. Illiterate | British Columbia - Prof. C. Verner | Dr. C. V. Davison |
| 6·6 | do | USA - 1960 census returns - Chicago district | R. M. Hilliard - based on 6 yrs. schooling |
| 8·3 | do | USA - 1960 census returns - over 25 yrs. old | D. Harman - based on 5 yrs. schooling |
| 9·55 | do | Canada - Prof. C. Verner | Dr. C. V. Davison |
| 11 | do | USA - 1960 census extrapolation | Angelica Cass |
| 11-15 | do | USA - Louis Harris and Associates surveys 1971 | National Reading Center, Washington DC |
| 18·5 | do | USA 1952. Fort Custer Army Reception Center | "Adult Reading" - Nat. Soc. for study of Ed. 1956 |
| 19 | do | USA Korean War recruits rejected | |
| 50·7 | do | USA - Chicago district - on test | R. M. Hilliard - cf. years of schooling above |

# The B.B.C. Project

**Jenny Stevens**

In May, 1974, the BBC announced to the press its intention to launch a three year project aimed at helping to reduce adult illiteracy in the United Kingdom. The press release was of necessity relatively brief. You might find it helpful to see this fuller account of our current thinking and plans.

What emerges [illegible] and over again in discussion with teachers of adult illiterates is the degree to which feelings of shame and isolation stand in the way of individuals seeking help, even amongst those few who realise that sources of help exist. At present few illiterates come forward to centres which can help them, and there are obvious practical difficulties for the centres in publicising themselves to illiterates.

## The contribution of broadcasting

The situation is one in which it is arguable that broadcasting could make a unique and important contribution because of its ability to reach people in the privacy of their homes.

It could:

(i) provide programmes that nourish the intention to learn, going over early steps of reading that may have caused difficulty, gradually bringing the adult to the point where he might feel sufficient confidence to seek help outside the home;

(ii) publicise the sources of help;

(iii) assist in the training of helpers;

A major BBC effort in this field will hopefully be a useful educational initiative. The number of people for whom the programmes would have personal relevance is clearly very large.

It is, of course, uncharted territory. Broadcasting has been used in other countries as a major element in campaigns to eradicate adult illiteracy: Italy and Jamaica are the best-known examples. But these have been campaigns in rural societies, where groups often come together around the one available television set, and teaching from the screen was followed immediately by work with a teacher. They were campaigns in situations where illiteracy was normal and bore no stigma. The effectiveness of broadcasting in teaching isolated individuals to read is not proven. We are making the assumption that the main success of broadcasting is likely to be in eroding feelings of isolation and embarrassment, in creating a sense of modest progress and in spurring the adult to seek help from specialist teachers. And this brings one to the key question of relationships with other agencies.

**Current teaching provision**

The existing provision of teaching across the country is extremely patchy. A survey of provision made for the Russell Committee on Adult Education found that only 60% of the LEA's are currently offering classes or supporting voluntary schemes. The form and extent of such provision can vary from one enterprising adult education centre principal organising a single class, to a network of centres offering help easily accessible to most individuals in a particular authority. The amount of provision is increasing, but slowly. The impact of a broadcast initiative in these circumstances has to be considered very seriously. If only 5% of two million illiterates were suddenly to come forward for help, the existing centres would be swamped. A recent short item on illiteracy in 'Pebble Mill at One' stimulated hundreds of telephone calls asking for information about sources of help. That this is not an isolated occurrence is confirmed by the experience of Thames Television's 'Good Afternoon' and 'Today' programmes on illiteracy. It is clear that the BBC project with broadcasts weekly for three years, could stimulate massive student demand which must be properly prepared for. We hope that the early dissemination of information about the broadcasts will help people concerned with the provision of classes and tuition to make adequate forward plans.

With regard to channelling student demand, it is hoped that there will be a telephone service for viewers seeking help. We will build up information on every sort of literacy scheme in the United Kingdom and consult with organisers on what information to seek from an enquirer and how best to proceed in day-to-day student referral.

**Broadcasting and the learner**

We have begun by making two assumptions:

(i) that every year fresh adults will wish to reduce their problems in reading and writing;

(ii) that the problems of limited airtime will mean that we cannot broadcast material at an ever-increasing range of levels, on the Open University pattern.

The model we describe below envisages three levels of introduction only:

(i) By 'first level' we mean starting from almost zero knowledge.

(ii) By 'second level' we mean material still suitable for reading ages below seven, but intended for relatively committed learners.

(iii) By 'third level' we mean material aimed at reading ages of seven plus.

Our first and fundamental proposition is that further education broadcasting should make its contribution entirely in the first two levels, that is, those below a reading age of seven. BBC School Broadcasting makes provision at the third level. In fact, the purchase by School Broadcasting of 'The Electric Company' has been a key factor in our thinking. It is a brilliant and entertaining series, provided by the makers of 'Sesame Street' and the BBC intends using it to help reading in secondary schools. Although it is aimed at children, it is recognised in the U.S.A. to be attractive and of value to adult illiterates as well, largely because of the sophistication and pace of its production techniques. It will be broadcast on television in the summer of 1975 and 1976 and possibly beyond. It will be accompanied by student's booklets, and will be broadcast in daytime 'School' placings and is to that extent not ideal for adult use. But it is a resource which institutions can record and we think that parallel transmission of two levels of further education programmes in addition to 'The Electric Company', gives a wide spread of provision and is an economic use of our resources.

There are also specific reasons why we think the further education provision should be at the lower end of the reading spectrum. We think that watching television at home can, little by little, create confidence and reduce embarrassment about difficulties in reading and writing. The more basic the level at which we work, the greater the creation of confidence and sense of the possibility of learning. It is in the erosion of inhibition and of the sense of hopelessness that our contribution can be greatest. Most classes assume a minimum reading age of seven. We think our most useful contribution will be in helping people to reach a level at which

joining a class is even a possibility. In preliminary research it has also been pointed out to us that many applicants for classes are stuck at the 7 - level because of weaknesses in basic grounding. For such people our series will provide a form of revision, filling in basic gaps and clearing up misconceptions.

We believe that our contribution to a national campaign for improved adult literacy ought to be a long term one; we regard this area as one of our priorities. The model proposed extends over three years. Here is the pattern of regular broadcasts we envisage, aimed at the learner.

### The learner and television

We see the first level course as aiming to erode inhibition and anxiety, and we will make it as attractive and engaging as possible. It will be an all-year-round provision on television. The programmes will be roughly ten minutes in length, each programme having three showings within the week. We will try to distribute the transmission times on BBC1 so as to make the programmes accessible to most adults, including those on shift work. We will make sure that the programmes are sufficiently attractive adult entertainment not to alienate the literate.

It is important that the first level course should be of immediate practical help to the functionally illiterate. Full attention to social sight words.... 'Danger', 'Poison' etc. is obviously one element in this. Another will be the inclusion in the series of help with simple practical problems - for instance using bus services, finding one's way around office buildings, hospitals, etc. Throughout the series we will show people with reading and writing difficulties talking freely about them and giving practical advice on coping in situations where one cannot yet read one's way to a solution.

The first level course will be designed for isolated individuals viewing at home. It will not be constructed with a view to class use, though classes might find it a resource worth recording.

### Transmission for learners

For the benefit of those who have not received the first information leaflet here again is the pattern of broadcasts we envisage, aimed at the learner.

Year 1

Autumn 1975 - Summer 1976 Level 1 (Television)

This series of 10 minute programmes assumes no knowledge of reading skills; it will concentrate on teaching basic social sight words, recognition and formation of letters of the alphabet and on early word-building skills.

The programmes are designed for home viewing and their objects are to give people confidence in their ability to learn and to encourage them to seek help by contacting the student referral service.

Year 2
Autumn 1976 - Summer 1977 Level 1 (Television) updated/repeated

Autumn 1976 - Spring 1977 Level 2 (Television)

This series of approximately twenty 25-minute programmes will develop skills acquired in Level 1 and will be reinforced by a radio series of 'readings' of selected material.

Year 3
Autumn 1977 - Summer 1978 Level 1 (Television) repeated
Spring 1978 Level 2 (Television) repeated
Spring 1978 Readings (Radio) repeated

Since the last information leaflet there have been a number of developments in various aspects of the project:

*Viewing times*

Year 1: There will be three showings per week of each Level 1 programme, to enable people with varying domestic and work situations to have a choice of viewing times. The first showing of each programme in each week is planned for 5.55 p.m. on Sundays on BBC1 beginning 12 October, 1975, repeat times are Thursdays, 12.15 p.m. BBC1 and Saturdays, 10.25 a.m. BBC1.

*Piloting*

We have now completed extensive piloting in which three 10 minute trial programmes were shown to 30 groups of adult learners scattered widely throughout the U.K. In all we consulted approximately 300 students together with their teachers. These pilot groups included people normally taught in both one-to-one and class situations. Local Education Authority literacy classes, voluntary literacy schemes and the Prison Service all gave us a great deal of help in gathering together a number of learners.

These learners were not, of course, perfectly representative of the target audience in that they had already brought themselves to contact someone about their reading difficulties and they were viewing in a group situation. Nonetheless, the piloting has proved to be of great value. We have discovered that our first ideas of what would be attractive to illiterate adults were mistaken in several important respects and we are now hopefully more sensitive to the needs and expectations of the target audience. It is perhaps important to note that:

(a) most students thought that illiterate adults would respond to the invitation to telephone for help. They gave us valuable advice on how to make this invitation more effective.

(b) the groups often felt some frustration at the relatively slight teaching content of each of our trial programmes. They made a number of very acute criticisms and suggestions in this area and we will take these into account in making our final programmes. It is inevitable that ten-minute programmes whose main aim is to encourage individuals to seek help will be of limited value in class situations. The 20 twenty-five minute programmes which will compose the second level of the project (beginning 1976) though still aimed at the individual learner will be of greater value to classes than will Level 1.

*Support materials*

The reference to text leads to the vital question of non-broadcast material - students' books, teachers' books, materials for class use. There is a chronic lack of materials specially designed for adults. It is clear that there is a major need here and that we must create materials which consolidate the reading begun in the television programmes and provide the opportunity to practise the first steps of writing. Such materials will need to be created for both first and second level courses, possibly accompanied by a set of notes useful for teachers. At the moment we are working on the problem of the level one material and trying to tackle two key difficulties:

(i) How do you design materials which a totally illiterate adult can use on his own, with no help?

(ii) How do you get the materials to the adult who may be embarrassed at asking for them in a shop or newsagents?

*Print materials*

While meeting the 30 groups we have tested the design of print materials for the students' workbook to accompany the Level 1 programmes. We are also investigating unorthodox approaches to the distribution problem. We hope to make the first 10 units of print material, comprising the workbook, copyright free and to encourage local and national groups to duplicate these and distribute copies free in places where illiterate adults might be expected to come across them. Duplication by offset litho is inexpensive and we hope that this will provide an opportunity for a wide range of groups and individuals to contribute to a national drive to reduce adult illiteracy. Local knowledge of the best places for free distribution is itself a resource of great value. We hope to announce details of this copyright-free facility within the next few months.

*Student referral service*

We plan to open the student referral service during late September, 1975. We envisage displaying regional telephone numbers on the screen during the period until Christmas 1975 and then a single national number after that.

We will also cater for a postal referral service for those who are reluctant or unable to telephone. This might involve the would-be learner (or friend) completing a simple form (name address) printed, for instance, in the Radio Times. The location of this form could be simplified by including a literacy logo or symbol which could be displayed on the screen beforehand to enable instant recognition.

We see the function of the telephone service as:

(a) to take details of the caller's name and address and of the sort of help he or she seeks;

(b) to forward these details to the appropriate local education authority.

The coming into existence of a national telephone referral service is itself likely to get a great deal of publicity and media coverage. This publicity, together with the invitation to ring contained within the programmes each week, may well bring foward very large numbers of adult learners. It is very imprtant that anyone concerned with planning adult education provision should be fully aware of this.

We organised regional meetings during February and March, 1975, to consult fully with local education authorities about the running of this referral service. It is hoped that it will be possible to establish one main point of contact within each authority to whom all requests for tuition could be referred.

*Programmes and print materials designed for tutors*

As the demand for help and provision increases, so the need to mobilise and train tutors will increase. In Autumn 1975, as part of its further education output, the BBC will broadcast eight programmes designed to make some contribution towards the training of tutors. This series will be directed primarily at those who would like to start teaching an adult illiterate. However, it is hoped that the programmes will be of interest to those already engaged in teaching. Notes on the series will be available for organisers who wish to make use of the radio material in ongoing training schemes. The programmes will be broadcast on Tuesday at 7.00 p.m., Radio 3, from 28 October to 16 December, 1975.

*A tutor's needs*

A tutor's confidence and competence in the teaching learning situation will depend on the attitudes, knowledge and skill he brings to the task.

Attitudes: the tutor needs to be relaxed and patient; reliable and understanding; flexible and supportive.

Knowledge: the tutor needs some basic information on the nature of adult learning and on the techniques of teaching reading and writing.

Skills: the tutor needs skills in developing successful student tutor relationships, and skills in planning effective learning programmes.

It is clear that the radio series cannot take on the task of training tutors alone. The programmes are designed to make a contribution in this area and encourage individuals to seek further help and guidance before they start to teach.

*The programmes*

The following is a list of possible themes for the series:

- defining objectives for teaching and learning:
  students' needs and expectations;
  tutors' expectations and attitudes.

- motivation and the nature of adult learning:
  self-image - confidence competence;
  interpersonal skills;
  implications for teaching and learning.

- diagnosis:
  what a tutor needs to know about the student at the beginning;
  formal testing;
  evaluation as part of the teaching learning process;
  individual lesson planning - short-term and long-term;
  keeping records.

- basic approaches to reading and writing:
  language experience - social literacy;
  phonic whole word approach;
  word attack skills - context and comprehension;
  reading for a purpose;
  spelling and writing;
  writing and creativity;
  choice and use of materials.

- what a tutor needs now to find out.

Wherever possible the programmes will explore and develop these themes through material recorded in teaching and learning situations.

*Print materials*

A comprehensive handbook for tutors and organisers will accompany the radio series and has already been published. It is available from booksellers and from BBC Publications, London, W1A 1AR.

Notes on the content of the radio series will also be available to organisations wishing to make use of the material in training schemes.

# Part Two

## Aspects of Organisation and Management

# Adult Literacy Schemes - Model for Analysis

R. J. Kedney

In one sense the establishment and maintenance of a literacy project can be seen merely as an extension of normal practice into yet another field of activity by adult education centres and colleges. It requires the recruitment of personnel, both staff and students, the allocation of resources in terms of equipment and rooms, and the development of a curriculum in the absence of an examination syllabus. It is, therefore, yet another model of the decision-making process that leads to the establishment of a new course. However, in another sense it differs from much of previous practice in that it grasps the nettle of compensatory education in the adult sector, and all the problems inherent therein.

The critical decisions that influence not only the success or failure of the project but also its very survival may not be those that tradition has identified; for experience is thin and limited and what experience there is is motley and varied. The response made at a local level has tended to be the product of local pressures and local initiatives and often free of many of the established constraints of the formal educational system. The argument that the mass machine of the educational bureaucracy has been marked by its failure to identify and cope with this particular problem has led to a range of interesting innovations which could have significant implications for other areas of practice.

It has been suggested that here, as with other forms of educational activity, much of the crucial decision-making is carried out before tutors and students meet, and that, though they then have some degree of flexibility, they also have to have considerable resilience. The adult illiterate often

lacks such resilience at the outset of his tuition, having successfully fought considerable emotional battles with himself merely to arrive to meet his or her tutor. It is clearly crucial that organisers make meaningful decisions aimed at producing as near as possible the ideal teaching/learning environment before the initial meeting takes place. Educational managers can no longer rely on the, as yet, limited skills of tutors or on the strength of their students around them; their role is to manage professionally and effectively in a situation marked by stress and low level of tolerance.

Management styles will differ and, as with any decision-making process, they will be situationally governed. But an awareness of the diversity of practices elsewhere, contact with colleagues, recourse to written sources of information, and management techniques such as decision-tree analysis, may prove particularly valuable in an area where creative decision-making is not only possible but also necessary. The more agglomeration of information on work in so diverse a field, which as yet lacks any meaningful clarity of purpose or direction, is likely, however, to lead to confusion rather than to serve any useful purpose.

The papers that follow form a small collection of case-studies from the North-West, selected to illustrate some significant aspects of the diversity of developments at the level of a local education authority, a college, a department and a centre, set within markedly different communities. In an effort to facilitate both analysis and comparison the accompanying table was written; it endeavoured to offer examples of areas of decision-making and then some of the range of options within each. It in no way provides an exhaustive list, whether it is considered horizontally, that is in the areas of decision-making, or when read vertically to review the range of options in each area.

In some instances, the vertical column of the planning grid is not concerned with the decision-making, but rather with the implications of situations in which decisions are made since there is little or no choice. The first column identifying the nature of the community is clearly one such example; the nature of the intended catchment area may well influence not only the scale but also the nature of the project. To a lesser degree the second column, which is concerned with the nature of the agency which both makes and implements decisions, can also be considered an area of limited choice, but of significant influence upon other columns. Here, however, there may well be some options, e.g., between further education college and adult education centre, or between college departments, or indeed of establishing a new, small, but specialist agency, the level at which such decisions are made, being possibly a key factor in their development.

Other elements within the model are clearly concerned with fundamental decision-making in areas where the range of options would seem at times to be limited only by the imagination of the providers.

The forms of recruitment that have been, and are being, used effectively for both tutors and students vary considerably, though it may well be that certain forms influence the pattern of recruitment. It is, therefore, necessary to plan such action not only in terms of volume but also to relate it to the nature of the resources that are available. The mass media tend not to discriminate, which is useful if open-entry for all is envisaged, but some direction is possible and may be necessary. Similarly, the type of teaching structure need not be 1:1, home based tuition or small classes, but can be both, or team teaching, be based in homes, neutral premises, schools, colleges or any combination, or indeed lead eventually to a learning laboratory situation with prepared teaching programmes which are available to any user. The accompanying diagram serves to illustrate but some of the possible range of options.

The four major case-studies have been deliberately selected to provide illustrations of the differences in a number of the areas which may be identified. As such, they represent developments at local authority, or college and departmental level; in a major conurbation, a commuter belt area and a small mining engineering town. The staffing patterns vary, as do the types of provision made for different student groups, ranging from school-college link provision to work with mentally handicapped and mentally ill patients in major institutions. All are also, of course, concerned with adults in the community. Whilst one illustrates dispersed, home-based tuition, another is moving towards a highly centralised resource based on a learning laboratory. Different patterns of tutor-training have also been developed.

Whilst developments in this field pose major challenges to those in a position to take the critical decisions which influence subsequent developments, they also offer considerable scope for innovation. It is perhaps not too optimistic to regard this as an area which encourages and indeed demands creative management.

## Organising a literacy project

### A model for analysis

Notes:

1 Organising a literacy project is an exercise in decision-making.

2 Decisions are made consciously, or without prior thought as to the alternatives and the consequences.

3 Decisions made in one area impinge on others and so need to be made in context.

4 In an area such as literacy teaching with adults, commitments, once made, may be difficult to change.

5 The grid used opposite touches upon twelve topics and gives six points in each; as such it is little more than a first stage and can clearly be extended.

6 The case studies of schemes in action have been selected to offer models where differing elements of the grid have been developed and serve to illustrate potential.

## Organising a literacy project. A model for analysis.

| *Community* | *Institution* | *Structure* | *Admin. Staffing* | *Tutorial Staffing* | *Finance* | *Resources* | *Levels of Literacy* | *Students* | *Recruitment* | *Support Services* | *Placement Procedure* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inner urban | Local authority | 1:1 Home based | Full-time lecturer | Full-time tutor | Full-time staff salaries | Institution school college home or pub | Social sight vocabulary | Institutions | Radio-TV regional local | Counsellors | Enrolment procedure |
| Suburban | Large college department-mental | 1:1 small groups | Head of Dept. - part-time | Part-time (12 hours per week | Part-time staff salaries | Rooms | Basic literacy | Referred students | Social Services priests probation services etc. | Citizens advice bureau | Initial interview |
| Commuter | Small College | Small classes | Part-time organiser | Part-time (2 hours per week | Clerical salaries | Reading schemes | 'Functional' literacy | College students | students | Schools remedial service | Formal assessment |
| Rural market town | Adult education centre | Small classes - 1:1 | Clerical support | Volunteer tutors | A.V. equip. duplicating | Supplementary readers | Study skills | Link courses | Local newspapers | Schools guidance service | Diagnostic testing |
| Rural villages | Ad. Ed. school base | Team teaching | Technician support | Volunteer aides | Books-reading schemes | A.V. equipt. | Staff training | Adults from the community | Posters-bookmarks | Social workers | Record keeping |
| Commuter/ new town | Social Services/ voluntary | Learning laboratory | Volunteers | Peer-groups | Income fees | Tutor-produced materials | Language skills - immigrants | Staff training | School circulars | Medical e.g. hearing-eyesight | Continuous assessment |

(to be read vertically only)

# A Local Authority Approach

## Liverpool

**W. H. Butt**

*The provision of literacy tuition in Liverpool in recent years has become widely known through the activities of the University Settlement Project, the featuring of a student in the Granada World in Action film and the articles published describing the growth of provision in the further education colleges. Careful planning has preceded the growth of college-based provision across the conurbation. The document that follows outlines the planning decisions that were reached up to that point. Subsequently the University Settlement Project has become a specialist agency of the LEA and it continues, at present, to operate as an autonomous unit providing home-based 1:1 tuition, in-service training programmes and an advisory service, whilst working alongside the colleges and evening institutes: Editor.*

### Extension of LEA provision for adult illiterates

Classes to be formed at:

Central College of Further Education
Millbank College of Further Education
Childwall Hall College of Further Education
Old Swan College of Further Education

and are to be continued at:

Roscommon Evening Institute
Ernest Cookson School

They will be run on the basis of:

1 Ratio 1 teacher to 6 students
2 Flexible enrolment: people will be admitted at any time during the term
3 The classes will extend over 3 terms

4 The classes will not close down if they fall below 6, providing fees have been paid

5 Fees will be waived in cases of economic hardship

6 There will be a central contact point where students will be interviewed and then allocated to the classes Liverpool University Settlement Project.

Reasons for Central Point of Contact for Students

1 Anyone, anywhere in Liverpool would feel it relevant to contact a central point

2 If contact points were localised there would be a large number of people for whom none of the contact points would be appropriate

3 Gives some idea of central demand

4 If classes are not available in all the areas required, they can be set up or students can be referred to Liverpool University Settlement Project. Students are not allowed to drift away

5 Generally, publicity is much easier: Citywide publicity is much more forthcoming and less confusing when one central point is used. Also this recognises that illiterate people have a problem sifting information. A central point to contact makes it much easier for them.

Organisation of Extended Provision

1 Publicity:

(a) Citywide: Media:
Post, Echo, Weekly News, National Press, Radio Merseyside, Television.

Other:
Social Services Departments, Local Industry, CAB's, Doctors, Employment Exchanges, DHSS, etc.

(b) Local Handbills, Posters, Cards in shop windows.

(c) Comprehensive, continuous publicity is essential. Too often lack of publicity has been taken to mean lack of demand. What has to be recognised is that adult illiterates need a different, more extensive form of publicity than ordinary night school attenders.

Sample of Advertisement Publicity

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH READING AND WRITING?

Phone for confidential interview at Central College of Further Education 709 7655.
Small classes or individual tuition available.

Central College

1 Phone calls for reading and writing help are received and dealt with by:
(a) One secretary who has been given responsibility for this work.
(b) She takes down name and address of caller, files it, makes an appointment for person to be interviewed at Central College.

2 Role of Person with responsibility for this work at Central College:
(a) Stress to secretary the importance of dealing with phone calls tactfully. Provide her with a timetable of interviewing times.
(b) Organise a small team of interviewers, perhaps from the colleges and institutes involved and the Liverpool University Settlement Project.
(c) Decide on allocation of students once the interview has taken place.
(d) Inform student of allocation and send off interview schedule and name and address to college to which student has been allocated.
(e) Contact those who do not turn up for interview to keep alive the possibility of them coming.

Interviews

1 Interviews take approximately ¾ hour.
Consists of: Interview Schedule
Holborn Reading Test
Schonell Spelling Test.

2 It is very important to discuss the interview schedule and the tests with interviewers. Liverpool University Settlement Literacy Project will be very pleased to do this.

Reasons for interview rather than normal enrolment

1 Interview schedule: gives a detailed picture of the student's background and educational experience and of the way he perceives himself. This is invaluable when devising the best approach to be used with individual students.

2 The Holborn Reading Test and Schonell Spelling Test give objective points of measurement of student's attainment. This is useful to know for:
(a) Planning work
(b) Enabling progress in reading writing field to be measured
(c) Research into literacy levels

3 At the interview it would be possible to ascertain whether student required class individual tuition.

Allocation

1 After interview, student is allocated to whichever class is nearest to him or to Liverpool University Settlement Literacy Project if he requires individual tuition, or to the Community Relations Council Language Liaison Project if he has English speaking problems.

2 If there is no class available to him, discussions will take place between the LEA and the Liverpool University Settlement Project to decide whether another class will be set up or whether the Literacy Project will deal with him.

3 Allocation should be done by informing student of where he is being sent and also informing college and sending an interview schedule.

4 Records must be kept both centrally and locally and it must be remembered that the interview schedules are confidential.

Colleges, Institutes, Liverpool University Settlement Project

1 Allocate Lecturer(s) to take responsibility for literacy works in colleges.

2 Once information has been passed on to the College, the College should then contact the student, thus providing two way re-inforcement: Central Point informs student of College: College contacts student.

3 Classes at Colleges
Ideally classes should be both in daytime and evening, and could be divided into roughly three categories.

a Class for beginners, those with a Reading Age of less than 8 years.

b For those with a Reading Age over 8 years who need to be made much more fluent at both reading and writing.

c Spelling class for those who can read quite well but find great difficulty in writing because they cannot spell.

If the resources were available, a basic English class would be a great help. This would be for those who could read and write well enough to get by, but would greatly benefit from continuing to study. A pre-CSE class would be a possibility.

Drop Outs Non Starters

There will always be a number of people who do not start lessons after being interviewed or who stop coming to lessons once they have started.

Non-Starters

When Colleges have contacted student informing him when classes are available and has met with no response, a further letter should be sent stating regret at his absence but that at anytime he wishes to come he will be welcome. This leaves the door open for him to come at a future date.

Drop Outs

Student may have dropped out for a variety of reasons:

(a) Lack of motivation

(b) Feels he is not progressing

(c) Cannot cope with class situation; would respond better to individual tuition.

Here also a letter should be sent to student leaving way open for his return and telling him of Liverpool University Project. It is vital that student be contacted, otherwise he will just drift away.

Methods

The booklet for voluntary tutors written by Tom McFarlane, used by the Liverpool University Settlement Project, is available from Edge Hill College of Education, price 30p. This is most useful and outlines the basic methods of teaching reading and their adaptation for use with adults. For those teaching adult illiterates there are two areas of skill and understanding necessary:

1 The basic mechanics involved in teaching reading.

2 The adaptation of these mechanics for use with adults and an appreciation of the social implications of illiteracy.

Since it is very rare for people to possess both areas of understanding, a course in the teaching of adult illiterates is essential. (See LUS Project Training Course).

Equipment

Each student will be at a different level and will need different approaches and materials.

Basic Materials necessary are:

1 A selection of reading books.

2 A selection of spelling and work books.

3 A Stott Reading Kit.

4 Forms, newspapers, etc.

# A College Approach

## The Reading Centre at South Trafford College

**Connie Timpson and F. Ansell**

...n of literacy tuition at the South Trafford College of Further ...ion has developed as a service to the whole student body of the ...o local secondary schools and the adult community. Organisa- ...he Reading Centre functions as an integral part of the counselling ...of the College rather than as the function of any individual depart- ...t. As such it offers an interesting model of current practice.

The Centre has grown by the efforts of the Lecturer in Charge from a single evening class established by the Cheshire Authority and a desire to assist College students in difficulty. That the Centre has grown is due, in part, to the team work undertaken by the College Counsellors such that the Centre is never unattended during "normal working hours".

It is our aim to cater for all who seek assistance and to publicise the Centre to attract the greatest possible number of enquiries. The level of work undertaken is now such that additional full-time staffing is urgently required.

*Purpose*

1 To provide a remedial service for students already attending the College.

2 To provide an advisory service to College Staff and to test groups on request.

3 To provide a service to secondary schools who may wish to send pupils, possibly as individuals, in their last year, for help in reading and writing on a 'link course' basis.

4 To provide a service to the Community who may take advantage of the Centre to improve literacy at any level.

*Provision*

The Centre is open from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. every day and between 7.00 and 9.00 p.m. two evenings a week. (The Centre is closed during College holidays but the Summer break is kept as short as possible). There are also three 'Special' evening classes.

*Recruitment*

Recruitment is most often by 'word-of-mouth' recommendations of other students and outside agencies, i.e., police, doctors, social services, library staff. The Centre advertises in the press aiming to attract the attention of relatives and friends of those in need. The Centre participates in the ALWRAC clearing house scheme which is advertised regularly on Granada Television.

*Initial reception*

Any approach to the College by telephone or in person is handled by a receptionist or telephonist who, without any emotion, transfers the client to the Lecturer in Charge of the Centre. Once personal contact is established, interviewing and any necessary assessment can be made.

The Centre is staffed by one full-time member of staff (Lect. I) who is part of the Counselling Team and contributes to this work; the other two counsellors have some knowledge of the work of the Centre and can help out in an emergency. Six part-time teachers work in the evening sessions at the Centre and four others at the classes held for the mentally handicapped. They are paid by the hour, (C grade).

*Rooms and equipment*

The Reading Centre is a small room on the ground floor, easily accessible from the outside. The occupants are not visible from door or window. The furniture consists of a desk (with telephone), lockable filing cabinet, bookshelves and cupboards, dado-height socket outlets and tables and chairs for four students. It is understood by all that visitors should knock and wait for an invitation to make an entry. Efforts have been made to make the room look informal. In addition, the classroom nearest to the Centre is used in the evenings to accommodate the larger groups. Then the Centre is used to interview new students, test progress, and to provide a place of refuge from the teaching area for a smoke and chat at any time during the session.

Books, cards, and audio-visual equipment are used extensively. This list is of the most important material.

A 1 Cassette Tape-Recorder.
3 Cassette Players.
1 Junction box.
6 Sets of earphones.
1 Synchro-tax "Talking Page".
1 Language Master.
1 Stillitron.
2 (old) typewriters

The appropriate "soft-ware" for use with above. Including the English Colour Code pre-recorded tapes and tapes from Remedial Supply Co.

B The Stott Kit.
"News in English", Study Cards, "Choose the Word".

C Reading Books selected from the NARE list.

D Test Material.

*Finance*

Finance is allocated to the Centre from College funds as money is allocated to any other unit.

*Statistics for the year 1973-4*

| | Student Hours |
|---|---|
| Daytime | |
| External Students | 397 |
| Internal Students | 350 |
| one member of staff | 1336 |
| Evening | |
| One member of staff and 2 part-time (2 hours each) | 2283 |
| Total student hours at the Centre | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Special Classes | | |
| At Grove School (local special school) | 12 on register | 2 staff |
| At College | 6 on register | 2 staff |

These numbers are already greater this session.

*Future plans*

It will be possible to open the Centre on two more evenings, using the present equipment and with extra part-time staff if the demand grows as a result of the BBC programme. Ideally the centre could be enlarged to provide for all secondary children in need of help and an in-service training centre for teachers who could be seconded for short periods to work with the Lecturer in Charge.

# A Departmental Approach

## Organisational and Management Factors Appropriate to Newton-Le-Willows College of Further Education

### A. Literacy Provision in the context of the College Organisation

**J. L. Nicholson**

The college is a local one providing courses for the Metropolitan District of St. Helens, and in the case of specialist courses such as Nursery Nursing, Community Health and Social Services drawing students from a wide area of what was South Lancashire. Newton has good links by road and rail with Liverpool and Manchester and there is easy access by motorway to North Lancashire, Yorkshire and the South. The College is organised, at present, in five main departments - Engineering, Nursery Nursing, General and Commercial Studies, Nursing and Social Welfare Studies and Adult Studies. The College is currently in group V and continues to expand, the buildings have been extended several times in recent years; nevertheless, much of the work of the College takes place in several annexes and lack of accommodation is a serious problem.

The Adult Studies Department was formed in September, 1971, as an administrative unit by linking eventually five evening centres to a number of non-vocational classes taken from other departments under a newly appointed Head of Department. The Head of Department was supported by the three part-time evening vice-principals and some clerical staffing, together with support from the College office. With local government re-organisation the structure was greatly changed - our new LEA imposed its existing policy of having evening centres separate from the colleges. To add to the problem then facing us, my Head of Department left at the same time. It took a little courage and much persuasion to convince the LEA that the department should continue and that a new Head of Department should be appointed. The Adult Studies Department was reduced from a group II to group I department and at that time became wholly college based - its present establishment now consists of one Head of Department, one Lecturer I in Communication Skills and one Lecturer I in Craft Subjects.

I have not as yet spoken about the reasons for the establishment of a Department of Adult Studies. Mention should be made of the desire of the former Authority and of the Inspectorate to achieve a balanced provision of education in the area (here I must mention the support given by David Selby, Adviser for Adult Education in Lancashire). However, as you know there is a strong entrepreneurial streak in further education and I am sure that the department in no small way owes its origin to the efforts made by the College itself.

When considering the relation of the Adult Studies department and College to the community, it will be seen that with a population of 22,000 the town of Newton-le-Willows must have strong links with us and our work. It was this strong local connection that made the creation of a department more feasible, since ideally adult education must be community based. When examining the community (and fortunately the then Head of Department had contacts with the University of Liverpool, The Department of Health and the WEA) a joint exercise showed gaps in the educational provision for the disadvantaged adult. In educational terms it may be argued that we are all disadvantaged in some way; however, we saw certain specified groups who seemed to have a greater need in our area. The formation of the Department of Adult Studies provided an organisational framework whereby it was possible to weave the threads of provision into a deliberate policy of providing a service on a number of fronts, one of which was literacy. Despite our attempts to formalise patterns of provision, there were occasions when it seemed that preplanning and design had to be supplemented by opportunism. The pieces were sometimes discovered seemingly hapazardly and then sewn together. The result was not, however, without its attraction - variety is always attractive. I suspect that if everything were of uniform quality and of a geometrical design it would not arouse our emotions - and I need not remind you that illiteracy arouses emotions.

Mention of the word "variety" leads me to say that from the outset we considered adult illiteracy problems to be synonymous with a variety of needs for which a variety of provision is required. In other words, I think there is no single best provision for the teaching of adults with literacy problems. We aim to offer a varied approach based on small classes and offering one to one tuition where it is necessary. We find that students acquire greater confidence in themselves when they realise other people have the same problem, and most students show a marked improvement in personal development.

An increasing part of our work, about which Miss McMinnis will later speak, is our involvement with neighbouring psychiatric hospitals. Much

basic literacy work is being done and is yet being planned, particularly for long stay patients. The college is playing its part in the move from institutions to sheltered hostels before moving fully into society.

May I now turn to matters such as resources, staffing and equipment. In my opinion, the potential elements for provision of resources exist in any college. At the heart of the programme we have a planning team charged with curriculum design, co-ordination, training and evaluation together with a base in college. In this instance ours is built around a communication skills laboratory and a team of staff. An existing classroom has been converted and equipped by departmental money and from a contingency account which I control; much of the work had been incorporated into the training programme of electrical engineering students and the interest generated by this project was in itself an added bonus. Other than this room, no specialist provision is required; in fact, a deliberate policy of integration into the mainstream of further education is desirable.

In terms of staffing, a specialist lecturer in communication skills was considered essential. We looked for someone with qualifications and experience in remedial and or adult education. There was some difficulty in obtaining approval from our Authority for this post but the relevance and importance was finally recognised. The following session we decided that a specialist lecturer in crafts was needed. More work was being undertaken in the hospitals, training centres and old people's homes, and the crafts and literacy emphases are often able to work hand in hand. Moving on to support, then, this should be available when wanted. At Newton, literacy is not the Cinderella in the College; it is regarded as an important means of the College reaching out into the community as a whole. I have found that an Adult Studies Department, when given support, may happily take its place alongside the more traditional departments, and can often stimulate interests in a variety of matters within the College.

Support in terms of finance, accommodation and staffing is normally adequate to meet our present commitment, although I anticipate increasing demands. (However the department is presently understaffed due to the literacy vacancy left by internal promotion). The allowance which the department currently receives has been sufficient to ensure that the literacy programme has not been seriously hampered by financial considerations. The current financial situation obviously puts pressure on part-time classes; however, by a policy of robbing Peter to pay Paul I have prevented these cuts from affecting the provision we offer in the Adult Studies Department.

In this paper I have given some indication of the factors considered by this College when developing a compensatory programme for non-literate adults. I am aware that in the time allotted to me I have not been able to touch upon every aspect; yet I hope that I have given some indication of the type of initiative at college or Authority level and what has been achieved in practice at the Newton-le-Willows College.

# Literacy provision at Newton-Le-Willows

## College of Further Education

### B. Detailed survey of the structure and provision in the department

Elaine McMinnis

Under re-organisation the literacy provision at Newton-le-Willows College has come under the administration of the St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council, part of the Merseyside Metropolitan area, which also contains the St Helens College of Technology who in turn have made their own provision for literacy tuition. The new St. Helens Metropolitan District therefore has established a joint literacy scheme for the District, of which the Newton-le-Willows provision forms a part. The District provision is centred on and administered through the two colleges and extends to various adult education evening institutes. The establishment of the joint literacy scheme has required conscious decision making rather than the evolution of the local schemes which had previously occurred.

The St. Helens Metropolitan District appointed, in summer 1974, an Adviser for Adult Education who assumed responsibility for joint literacy scheme supervision and oversight of the growth. As yet, however, the day-to-day running and administration still devolve around the two colleges and their provision and it is not, therefore, out of place to describe the present literacy provision at Newton-le-Willows and the future plans for growth.

Newton-le-Willows is a community small enough to lend itself to good relationships between the various statutory bodies and voluntary agencies and the role of the Adult Studies Department has been to build on these links in developing inter-agency co-operation. Reorganisation complicated the communication by the movement of personnel and of offices, and the change over of staffing within the Department at the same time left the problem of reforging the former links. This proved a time-consuming process but was seen to be an essential requirement before further provision could be adequately established.

A joint literacy meeting within the new St. Helens Metropolitan District, organised by the Adviser, helped in the discovery of the identity of many of the personnel, in particular in the Libraries, who have taken a serious interest in the literacy problem and wish to provide a back-up service in reading materials within the library for students receiving tuition. The problem remains, however, that once communication and co-operation have been firmly established within the District, stronger links must be formed with other Merseyside Metropolitan Districts to ease the referral situation for students and to stop the district becoming isolated and inward-looking in its provision. The existence of the Merseyside and District Institute for Adult Education may well help in this respect, although initiative will have to be taken on the part of the literacy providers in the area as a whole.

*The departmental setting*

The appointment of a new Head of Adult Studies from within the department left a vacancy in the Literacy Lectureship which as yet has not been filled. With the original full-time appointment in literacy, which was then a new post in the department, the provision had grown and had spread in its emphasis to almost all categories of adults with any kind of reading, writing and spelling problem. As such, with the staffing level at a continuum but the area of responsibility showing considerable increase, it has proved extremely difficult to re-appoint.

Advertising in itself proved difficult. The original title to the lectureship was "Communication Skills". On initially advertising for a replacement, however, this word drew many people who assumed the type of communication involved in General Liberal Studies programmes and not literacy work. Further re-advertisement had drawn the attention of well qualified and able staff who have been disappointed in the salary potential and have therefore not submitted serious application. The problem remains and interviewing is again imminent.

The full-time staff member accepts responsibility for the other part-time staff who teach for us in literacy. This at present stands at about twenty staff running classes in College and in outside centres. Departmental policy is to build up teams of staff who work at the same time in a team-teaching situation, each accepting responsibility for one class. This is designed to avoid isolation in the staffing which we find can happen very quickly in literacy work and is to the detriment of the students. Staff work in the main on a 1:4 ratio, with a higher register ratio accounting for those students who do not attend regularly or are on shift work. Provision at present is in the evenings and is soon to include daytime tuition in the College, hospital and other centres.

The four adult centres and the Ravenhill Psychiatric Hospital are staffed from the College by part-time staff and the policy is to include them also in College classes in order to bring them into touch with the general College growth. This is a new development following on former links with two hospitals now separated into another District on reorganisation.

The two schools, one E.S.N., one S.S.N., in the area provide tuition for the mentally disordered adults in the area, staffed in the main by school staff employed by the College and recently mixed with outside staff through the College.

*Equipment*

Equipment is provided through the College on requisition through normal departmental finances. The adult centres, however, have separate funding to save draining the College funds. Acquisition of equipment as a whole is administered through the College and the intention is to provide a thorough variety, as required by the staffing and the students. The staff are to be familiar with all the equipment throughout the scheme and inter-loan will be operable.

A list of the types of equipment at present in use is included in these papers.

*Growth this year*

Within the department, decisions have been made both consciously and as a result of circumstances. Policies have been established, but, with the lack of a full-time staff member with responsibility for literacy, they have not, as yet, been fully implemented. Much of the implementation is pending action which may be almost immediate or may need to await the arrival of the full-time staff member.

At present there is departmental involvement in the community through the College provision, the hospital provision and the Adult Centres provision. Classes involve normal students, immigrant students, mentally handicapped and mentally ill students. We work closely with Social Service Departments and with the other local education establishments and staff are encouraged to form other links with community needs, such as work with the newly established Citizens Advice Bureau. New teams of staff have been established and it is envisaged that the multi-level range of tuition which at present exists for a wide range of people will continue to grow in its present form at an increased rate as the BBC programmes promote interest.

*Future growth*

The grounds have been laid or preparations made for all of the following:

Multi-level staff training.

Daytime literacy tuition in college.

Growth in immigrant teaching.

Tuition for the physically handicapped.

Tuition for the blind and deaf (especially hospitalised).

Industrial links.

Education for the community – (a) other agencies } seminars on literacy work
(b) general public }

Extensive publicity through doctors' surgeries, public buildings, etc.

Introductory courses for intending TOPS students.

*New equipment*

The intention is to keep abreast of the new publications and to build up stocks of basic reading and writing tuition schemes, spelling aids, background and back-up readers for use at home. Tutor-made materials, however, need to supplement each scheme and forge links between schemes where gaps exist, so staff are encouraged to use the college facilities and premises for preparation.

Attention must be focussed presently on the physical establishment of the learning laboratory as a specialised room used only for this purpose. At present the room is in need of the furniture, storage space and lock-up facilities which such equipment as we have should enjoy. The intention is that the room should be available for use and staffed daily and nightly between set hours so that both staff and students are free to attend at any time to make use of the facilities for preparation or tuition.

*Student body*

As in many other areas, the new local government boundaries have paid little heed to the social boundaries. As a result the Adult Studies Department finds that much of its catchment area lies outside the statutory boundaries, the more so since literacy students often like to travel outside their own home area but to a district with which they are familiar. The students are an even mixture of men and women of a wide variety of ages and with very varied literacy needs and problems. They also range over a wide variety of ability.

We style the courses as "Basic English" for those with reading, writing and spelling problems. The students we attract have basic literacy problems, problems of semi-literacy with poor spelling or handwriting or both, and people with severe perception problems such as those often styled dyslexic. Each student has an individual work scheme styled to his needs, and may have individual tuition if it is necessary. Approximately half of the people known to us are currently attending and we are at present surveying to discover the reasons for the non-attendance of former students and the irregular attendance of some current students.

*Staffing*

The staff currently employed are only a percentage of the staff now available to us after recent advertising and former training courses. We have a pool of staff who are awaiting training and or employment and on whom we rely. Staff trained in other areas but living locally to Newton-le-Willows are also referred to us by the other authorities. Ideally we require our staff to be amenable, adaptable and approachable, willing to accept fairly extensive training and also, where possible, willing to teach more than one type of literacy student. The staff are required to team-teach rather than remain in isolation and they must be able therefore to work amenably with staff as well as students.

Staff approach us offering literacy help for a variety of reasons. Some are drawn by sympathy for people with literacy problems; not all of such applicants are suitable and all are therefore required to do some introductory training in order to discover whether they, and we, feel they are suited to the work. Others are already employed full-time in jobs where they meet the public, or in schools and colleges, and are able to offer only evening and holiday work. Still others are at present unemployed, such as mothers with small children; these fall into two categories (i) those who wish to become useful to more of society than their immediate family and (ii) those who have taught previously and wish very much to extend their knowledge and experience in order to keep in touch with their career and to be able to teach better, thereby possibly lessening the chances that any children whom they teach would leave school with literacy problems.

A combination of such people, as our teams of staff prove to be, provides the most successful method of coping with the endless list of literacy problems and the variety and type of student. Combining such a mixture of talented staff, we hope to produce many of our own teaching materials in joint projects which we hope will feed back to the literacy student all the benefits of recent learning techniques and materials.

**List of equipment at present in use**

| | |
|---|---|
| Language-Master | Slide Projector |
| Stillitron | Stott Programmed Learning |
| Syncrofax | S.R.A. Kit |
| Bingley Auto-Tutor | Various book-based reading schemes |
| Tape Recorders | Basic Instructional Books |
| Overhead Projector | Background Readers (for student loan also) |
| Slide Tape Projectors | |

(Gaps to be filled by Tutor-made prepared materials including the Language Experience Teaching Approach, made at the time of tuition by student and tutor).

## A Centr Based Approach

# Victoria Park Scheme (Annexe of North Trafford College)

J. G. Peden

The Victoria Park Adult Education Centre provision for helping adult illiterates started in 1967, in the form of one Basic Reading class for adults, which was advertised as one of eighty classes provided by the Centre. There was also a short supplementary note in the prospectus, further elucidating the area of need the class was attempting to serve. The class used to form at the beginning of the year with between four and six students, but would then fade out of existence during the course of the year; in fact, one year the class failed to form. The reasons for this lack of success were no doubt as numerous as they were complex, although there were two factors which were obviously detrimental to the well-being of the class. One was the actual location of the class and the other the lack of awareness of the providers (in the initial stages) that a class of this nature requires much more effort and time than the general adult education class, in terms of publicity, organisation and teaching involvement.

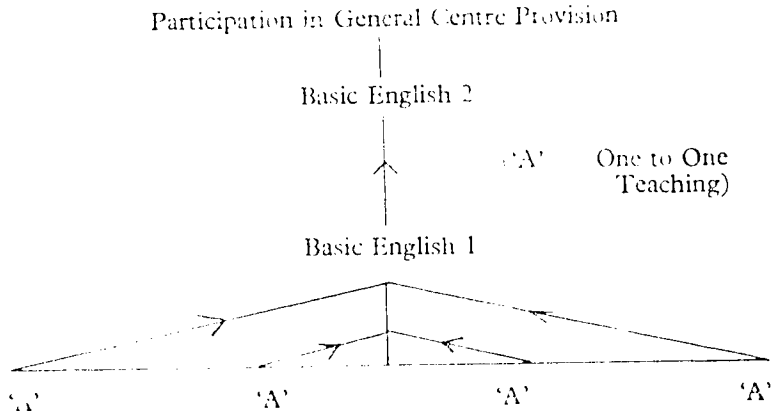
The Basic English class, although advertised as a Centre class, was actually held in splendid isolation in the main College building, which, because of the relatively small number of evening classes is largely empty and totally lacking in the atmosphere needed for this type of class. Besides the actual physical and psychological disadvantages of the building, there were also communication problems in that the College is two miles from the adult education centre, thus making it very difficult for full-time staff to maintain personal contact with tutor and class, which is of great importance from a motivational point of view. At the first opportunity the class was moved into the actual Centre. Immediately, the students and tutor felt the benefit of being in 'the swim' of Centre activity. Communication problems were eased, the tutor's needs were more readily satisfied, the social atmosphere improved with the availability of coffee in the convivial atmosphere of the common room. Coffee was at first taken in the

privacy of the class, but after a fairly quick growth in self confidence, was taken in the common room with the rest of the Centre students, which is of course an important step in itself. Because of these changes and more general effort all round, plus specific improvements with publicity, the student numbers grew to twenty; because of the range of individual differences and the undesirability of a large remedial class (average attendance sixteen) it was decided to divide the class into two groups, which proved to be much more manageable.

Students first arrive at the Centre usually after having made contact by telephone (numbers given in Centre brochures) or they are brought along by relations, social workers or past teachers. It is important for a full-time member of staff to meet them on this first occasion, when they are given general information about the centre and details of the help provided for them in their area of need. All seem to respond very readily to the idea of the 'Head' showing an interest in them and in fact on many occasions have remarked how relieved they are to have surmounted the first obstacle. The next step is to introduce the student to the tutor, who in the first instance attempts in a very informal way to assess the student's reading level. The tutor considers that since she is dealing with small numbers, standard tests are not necessary initially, so where possible, assessment is made by hearing the student read or write a little, if he is at all able. Any points which might have arisen from previous interviews with the student, such as motivational factors or a particular social problem, are communicated to the teacher. However an able, sensitive tutor will very soon become more informed about a particular student than the organiser. Classes held in isolation in adult education centres will not, however well organised they may be, satisfy the needs of a particular geographical area. The large voluntary schemes previously mentioned have the ear of the most favourable communication media, by virtue of their size and the large area they attempt to serve. It would be difficult for a small local scheme to emulate this, although the 'one to one' teaching could be copied. To be really able to provide for the needs of the illiterate with stability and continuity of provision, a scheme needs to be devised encompassing some of the advantages of the large voluntary schemes with those of the Adult Education Centre or some other similar education institution. The scheme I would advocate as going some way towards meeting these criteria is shown in diagrammatic form on page 68.

The structure would be completely open ended and so serve the needs and desires of the students at any given level. This scheme would incorporate the advantages of the voluntary schemes, particularly the one of continuity in the critically important initial stages of learning, when after a Centre or College holiday the student might find it difficult to return for

further lessons. The student after a period of time being taught in a 'one to one' situation with the flexibility of time and location of tuition, and after experiencing a sense of achievement, could then be invited to attend the remedial classes in the centre. At this stage he will be more highly motivated, and be less likely to 'drop out'. The centre could at all times act as a base for tutor meetings, training, the keeping of records and for general dissemination of information.




In order to facilitate a viable scheme of this nature voluntary tutors were advertised for in the Centre. There were forty replies from people willing to attend an inauguration meeting. Thirty four attended the meeting, at which time the general aims of the project and some of the problems that had arisen in other schemes were outlined. The meeting reacted most enthusiastically. Since there were already six people requesting help, it was decided to use a number of the volunteers who were trained teachers to start work immediately, which they did. Fifteen of the volunteers have now completed a course of training to enable them to teach the illiterate adult. The course is, of necessity, short and intensive, the main objectives being to make the prospective teacher more sensitiae to the student's needs and problems and to provide guidelines for the actual teaching situation.

The advantage of schemes organised by Adult Education Centres (Colleges of Further Education) is that the Centre or College provides a base of resources for the scheme both material and human. Professional teaching staff are always available to advise tutors and the larger centres

provide a useful recruiting ground for volunteer tutors and also for dissemination of relevant course information. Facilities for tutor training are also available, as well as the centre providing an alternative meeting place for tutor and student in the initial stages of teaching. The major disadvantage of organising schemes based on Adult Education Centres is the fact that the scheme is probably only one very small part of the Principal's work for which he will be unable to allocate sufficient time.

I would not expect the number of students receiving individual tuition to rise above forty at any one time. A further important aspect of a Centre scheme is the flexibility afforded by a group and 'one to one' tuition organised together, i.e. Students may receive tuition both in the group and 'one to one' situation. Students in a group may revert to 'one to one' during holidays. Volunteer tutors may teach individuals in a group situation under the supervision of a teacher, before embarking on tuition independently.

# Part Three

# Preparation for Tuition

# Diagnostic Problems in Adult Literacy

**Laverne Pearson**

We are given to understand in the literature that the essential ingredient in the solving of educational problems is the asking of the right, i.e., pertinent, questions - whatever they are. The type of questions which seem most important tend to be inextricably connected with the discipline with which an educationalist is involved - psychologists give prominence to psychological questions, sociologists emphasize social ones and so on. Nevertheless, this need not be an insurmountable obstacle, and it seems reasonable that the identification of problems is a permissible starting point in a consideration of literacy. At least, I hope this is so, because the essence of what I am going to say involves the identification of areas of complete or, at least, partial lack of knowledge which need our attention in the field of literacy before we can start formulating pertinent questions, quite apart from the task of trying to answer them.

The three main areas of which I suggest we know very little and which I should like to consider are: firstly, the nature of the reading process, i.e., what are the mental operations involved in the acquisition of reading skills? Secondly, whether the learning strategies of the mature adult differ from those of the young adult and the child, and, if so, in what way? Thirdly, what is the role of the standardized reading test in the adult literacy scheme?

It is obvious that there is little hope at the moment of precise answers to these questions but I think an awareness of them must have some influence on the organisation and formulation of the various proposed adult literacy schemes, particularly in relation to the staff one would wish to recruit and the training required of them, the type of provision and the degree of integration in the college organisation, and other considerations such as the type of consultative expertise to be used. A consideration of testing can make us aware of the difficulties of evaluating, but I hope the most valuable point of the exercise will be in the identification of areas which need to be researched before further progress can be made. One

of the worrying aspects about involvement in a large scale compensatory education scheme, which most of us believe adult literacy will become as a result of the BBC scheme, is the knowledge that most large scale compensatory education attempts can at best, be described as less than successful. So at the very least, we should be nothing short of meticulous in our consideration of the various aspects of the problem.

The word diagnosis has been rejected by psychologists lately; they prefer to talk of assessment. But whether we speak of diagnosis or assessment, I want to be quite clear that in this paper I am not primarily concerned with the problem of individual cases. It seems to me that that aspect of diagnosis would be more appropriately treated in a different context. I should like to consider the more general nature of reading disability. The varying socio-economic, emotional, cultural and cognitive backgrounds of adults who are poor or non-readers, together with their vast numbers, lead us to give some consideration to the possibility that the acquisition of what seems to be a fairly complex mental skill, and which, paradoxically, most people have mastered to a fairly high standard by late childhood, involves either some indispensable pattern of environmental circumstances, or some particular cognitive skills, or a particular mode of neurological functioning, or all three.

It has been said several times during the course that many illiterate or semi-literate adults have feelings of inadequacy, psychological problems or neurotic symptoms. These are fairly inextricably connected - inadequacy can give rise to unmanageable amounts of anxiety which can be self-damaging, so the individual takes reasonable measures to protect himself. Having listened to the reports of many teachers of adult illiterates, the most frequently used defence mechanism, and not an excessively neurotic one, is rationalisation. The individual has explained his lack of ability in reading both to himself or others, usually his teacher, in the way which is least damaging to himself and this explanation usually involves having some kind of a raw deal at school.

Perhaps the most obvious strategy for the teacher is to make use of the sizeable amount of experimental and research information which tells us about the environmental factors associated or correlated with successful learning. We know, for instance, that people tend to learn better when rapport is established between pupil and teacher; on closer examination this more precisely seems to be approval or, at least, acceptance of the student's personal values on the part of the teacher. We know that in many but certainly not all learning situations, the motivated student tends to be more successful, early readers tend to be more competitive [illegible]

the average or poor readers. We know, also, that material related to the student's experience and his existing knowledge is more easily learned and that finely programmed material gives more opportunity for success. Rosenthal and Jacobs found that teacher expectation can have almost unbelievable effects on performance. We read evidence of learners doing less well when they perceive themselves to be in stress situation. Sociology and social psychology show that learning in the group situation can be affected by group pressures and status within the group. In the area of personality we know that there is some research evidence to suggest that people who tend to be introverted can benefit from more structured teaching situations than extraverts: and one could go on ad infinitum with information that has been gathered about successful teaching situations. These are not put forward as causal factors but only factors that are associated with successful learning. In many cases exposure to this type of environment works, and it works without our knowing what is going on in terms of mental processes. In other words, we can achieve success in teaching by providing the appropriate stimulus situation and somehow getting the desired response. There are, however, aspects of learning, particularly in reading, where most of these environmental factors appear, at least, at first sight, to be missing. What I am saying is in a way a criticism of teachers; it is an observation that further problems lie ahead, at least in some teaching situations. Many adults as well as children learn to read after this 'environmental' approach but we do not really know the exact nature of the learning process itself.

Our problems really start when we get students who appear to have been provided with all the environmental and psychological 'perks' and they still fail to read. How do we deal with these students and how do they differ from the others who have succeeded? There is a tendency to break down reading into a number of seemingly less complex skills such as auditory memory, visual discrimination, auditory perception and so on. Efforts are made with students who fail to make progress to identify the areas of weakness, and then the teacher often attempts to devise an individual programme that will either improve the areas in which the student is a poor performer or concentrate on other, stronger, areas. More often, if the teacher has retained her stamina and the student has not become discouraged, reading may improve, but why and how has the student learned to read?

We do not really know the answers to these questions, but I think it might be helpful for us as educationalists to become more aware of areas of academic interest and research that are tending to break away from the old Behaviourist stimulus-response models of learning that have emphasised the importance of environmental stimulation and reinforce the



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extent of learning purely in terms of performance. Other theorists, such as Piaget, have turned our attention to internal, mental functioning in the area of intellectual development but it is the researchers in psycholinguistics who are emphasising the importance of the learner's mental activities in terms of language acquisition. Linguists and psychologists have combined their efforts over the last ten to fifteen years, and some, albeit incomplete, theoretical considerations about the nature of the acquisition of language skills have been suggested which may be useful in the teaching of reading skills; although there are always reservations about the practical classroom application of theoretical findings. Psychologists are primarily interested in the acquisition of spoken language and the learning techniques and strategies children use in acquiring this. Initially the child hears sounds which have no significance for him, so he has to learn the connection between the sound he is perceiving and meaning. What he has to learn in order to interpret the meaning of sound is syntax and grammatical rules, i.e. the acceptable way in which sound is used for communication. Nobody teaches young children grammatical rules, but parents expose their children to linguistic experience and they are very keen to guide their performance. What the child seems to be doing is trying out certain types of linguistic behaviour, and the people in his environment are providing him with immediate feedback on his performance. Consequently, when the child is very young he has mastered all the basic rules of grammar and is able to communicate with an infinite variety of meaning. What appears to have happened, according to psycholinguists, is that the child has grasped the significance of the sounds of spoken language; in other words, he has 'cottoned on' to the correct cues. Essentially he has fathomed or learned to use language himself in so far as he has tested out his own hypotheses, but his verbal environment and the feedback, giving him information about his mistakes, are also of paramount importance. So the psycholinguist is saying that children learn spoken language because they have learned to ask the right questions and recognise meaningful cues.

Similar processes are going on when the person learns to read; the connection to be learned is between the written symbol and its meaning. Most people who come to the reading situation have already mastered spoken language to a fairly complex level, so that they have experienced success in one linguistic process. Some psycholinguists have suggested that there is a possibility of externally imposed rules interfering with the hypotheses-testing of the person in the learning situation, although they are very hesitant in offering advice about classroom practice. Torrey has described an interesting case study, in some detail, of a working class negro child in the United States who appeared to have fairly average

general abilities and who seemed to have no atypical factors in his environment but who could read to a very high level of proficiency before he started to attend school. After a fairly prolonged investigation of the child's experiences, she concluded that reading seems to be learned rather than taught, and that the key question in the learning situation is 'How does something I say look in print?' or, 'What does that print say?'

I do not want to get involved at this time in the complexities of psycholinguistic theory, but I am suggesting that it is an interesting alternative to the stimulus-response emphasis which, because of the general climate of education, has tended to pervade the teaching of reading skills. It may be that in classroom practice it will make little difference except, in terms of the orientation of the teacher, it could have some interesting developments in pupil-teacher relationships.

It may be that poor readers have not learned to use the right cues or in psychological terms have not developed the correct learning strategies, but at the same time many of them are capable of learning other complex skills. Some people are described as having only a specific area of learning disability - reading. To stop at this stage one would be saying that some people persist in their reading difficulties because they are unable to learn certain skills, even when they have received extended and skilled remedial help. There are, however, some attempts being made to discover if there is any basis for this difficulty in modes of neurological functioning. I am not talking of people with identifiable organic, neurological damage which in certain circumstances prevents learning or destroys previous learning, but about people who in certain respects may have atypical neurological functioning - not inferior or defective but different. Not a lot is known yet about the functioning of the cerebral hemispheres of the brain, but from a series of researches done at various centres in this country and the United States, it appears that although all mental functioning is represented in both hemispheres, e.g., visual and auditory perception, there is, to some extent, hemispheric specialisation. One factor seems fairly well corroborated, that the left cerebral hemisphere is the area of pronounced linguistic specialisation in most people. If we are presented with linguistic tasks to the right hemisphere only, most of us experience difficulty, irrespective of dominant eye or hand. It seems that at least some linguistic tasks are involved in some degree of hemispheric specialisation. An important implication from some of the research is the finding that many poor readers have lin uistic symmetry, i.e., they lack any marked degree of specialisation. This does not necessarily indicate a genetic transmission of reading difficulty since cerebral dominance and specialisation is developmental- a result of biological maturation and environmental experience. How then do we explain adequate or good performance of other skills such as those

involving mainly visual-spatial performance? This type of skill, which does not have pronounced specialisation in either hemisphere, may well depend on the amount of sensory information received, whilst reading may involve more internal processing of information.

There is a surprisingly small amount of established knowledge in the field of adult learning, especially in relation to the mental strategies used by older students. There is some evidence that loss of speed in learning is often compensated for by a greater fund of information and greater skill in its utilisation. There may, however, be increasing resistance to the effort of abandoning, to any great extent, old attitudes and patterns of thought. These resistances may be overcome as much by motivation an l opportunity as by ability. Jerome says "The data currently available does not provide an adequate basis for deciding whether or not the motivation-speed-indigence-ill-health syndrome can be accepted as a sufficient explanation of the observed age differences in learning performance".

From reports of work done with mature adult students, I should like to put forward the following two points which may be of particular importance in the organisation of the teaching situation of mature adult readers. Firstly, although it seems evident that many adults with reading difficulties are of, at least, average cognitive ability, it does not follow that they will be able to follow highly verbalised or abstract explanations of the 'rules' of reading and spelling. As far as the cognitive aspects of learning are concerned, this could be more obstructive than the provision of over-simplified material. Piaget's work brings out the importance of using the appropriate conceptual level of communication between pupil and teacher and there is some danger of confusing perceptive, adaptable behaviour with high levels of conceptual thinking; no doubt the opportunities provided in the learning environment could lead to this development. It seems to me that a great deal both of organisational and teaching ingenuity is needed to deal with this point in the area of adult literacy.

Secondly, the adult learner, even with the most limited experience, has received and interpreted a great deal of sensory information which has been organised into meaningful knowledge. His modes of organising new information seem to become increasingly more set and well established as he gets older and so this necessarily involves a greater variety and flexibility both in types of provision, and presentation of material. There are a number of problems which arise from this point - how many types of provision need to be made for poor adult readers? is it variety in the provision of teaching materials as much as flexibility on the part of the teacher which leads us to the unfathomable question of the 'ideal tutor'? We could also ask if the standardised reading tests could help us in this area.

When a student initially presents himself, the teacher wants to get some idea of the actual level of his reading ability so that a suitable teaching programme can be presented. Standardised reading tests are either merely tests of word recognition or reading comprehension or both, but the vast majority of such tests are standardised on child populations or, if they are adult tests, they are based on American norms. Teachers can make use of the tests in an intuitive, diagnostic way, but they are unable to use the scores and norms in an empirical, evaluative way since they are based on different populations. Indeed, many teachers object to the use of these tests with adult students, mainly because of the possibility of it interfering with their rapport with the student and have devised other techniques for assessing the level of reading difficulty of the student.

In spite of limitations in the use of standarised tests we need to be able to assess, in a fairly objective way, the success in our various approaches to dealing with the problem of adult literacy. At the moment there are no really adequate instruments to help us in this task; traditional types of diagnostic reading tests take a deal of time and resources to construct, and therefore adequate assessment of this sort will only be available some time in the future. An interesting development in keeping with the concept of functional literacy, which has already been discussed during the course, is the possibility of using criteria-related assessment of reading skills. This involves assessment of an individual's literacy needs in terms of his life situation, the skills that are necessary for him in his employment and that will enable him to cope with any possible promotion, those that are necessary for him to fulfil his civic rol., and those he needs within a social context. This type of assessment also involves the fulfilment of certain psychometric criteria, but the resources expended on it may be more meaningful in terms of our more immediate goals with the adults with reading difficulties who are seeking, or who are soon likely to be seeking, our help.

I am afraid I have only fleetingly touched on some of the central problems of assessment or diagnosis in the field of adult literacy and provided no answers. However, the picture is not quite so gloomy as it might seem, since the area of reading as a whole has become one of interest to a much wider area of expertise, in the last few years, and there is some interesting research being carried out over a variety of disciplines. I think we must make sure that people who are primarily practitioners not only know what is going on but have an opportunity to make their contribution.

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# Recruitment - Students and Tutors

**John Robinson**

If the right publicity is used and the timing of it is correct, there is very little problem in recruiting students or tutors for a literacy campaign. A systematic approach is very important if the balance of students and tutors is to be kept equal. Also, if potential students are not to be disappointed through lack of tutors, it is very useful to have a reserve publicity drive that can be put into operation at once so that the number of tutors can be increased at any time.

The recruitment of students for a literacy scheme often depends very much on someone who can read and is prepared to pass the message on to the non-reader, so any publicity should be aimed with this method of contact in mind.

The recruitment of tutors can be rather different. There is nothing better than the personal approach to people or groups of people who one knows may be sympathetic to the problems of the non-reader.

The recruitment of both students and volunteer tutors is closely linked, for any publicity for one may bring in the other. Therefore it is important that any literacy scheme must be ready to help those in need of tuition from the beginning. In the Farnworth scheme we were prepared to overcome this problem by putting the first students into one of the existing adult centre reading classes if they did not wish to wait for a volunteer tutor to be trained.

The first person to recruit is the tutor who is going to train the volunteer tutors. The local schools' Remedial Reading Centre is a good place to visit since one of the staff may be prepared to take on the work on a part-time basis or, if they are not prepared to help, they may be able to suggest suitable people to contact. It helps a great deal if the person who trains the volunteer tutors will also take on the task of interviewing the prospective students and also pairing up tutors and students.

Many of the initial contacts for both students and tutors will be made by telephone so the people who answer the telephone should be in a position to

a) handle the enquiry in a sympathetic and understanding manner and above all be confident and discreet;

b) be able to obtain the name and address of the person at the other end of the telephone line;

c) be able to say how soon it will be before the student will be interviewed or when the next tutors' course will be commencing.

d) have as much information as possible so that the student and tutor may have an up-to-date picture of the scheme.

To assist all who may find themselves answering a telephone call for help, it is of help if regular memos are sent, giving progress reports on the scheme. Additional copies can also be left by the telephone for quick reference. Student referral forms should also be left by the telephone so that any useful information may be noted at the first contact. It is very useful for the caller to have a name to ask for, so first names are a must on all publicity, preferably both a male and female contact.

The timing of publicity is very important so that there is a steady flow of tutors for training and a steady flow of students for the tutors who have passed through the training courses. Our first "batch" of tutors came from the adult centre classes which are held in a wide range of vocational and non-vocational subjects. The part-time teachers of our 250 classes were each given information about our Literacy Scheme, emphasising that initially it was tutors and not students we wanted. Each part-time teacher was given a tutor's application form. Part-time teachers in adult centres are very useful "agents" for recruiting both tutors and students because their students cover nearly every street and factory in the area. In turn, students and their families can also be used as "postmen" for sending out publicity.

The press and local radio are best contacted by information sheets headed "Press Information". Make sure that a telephone number and name are included on the sheet so that further information may be obtained if required.

Publicity should be sent to as many local people and organisations as possible, such as:

Students in classes.
Part-time teachers.
Local schools.

Local libraries.
Local factories, w[illegible] offices.
The Samaritans
Youth Clubs.
Child Guida[illegible]
Marriage Guida[illegible]
Employment Exc[illegible]
Members of Parliament
Local Councils (including Trade and Commerce).
Citizens Advice Bureau.
Probation Service.
Police.
Rent Collection Points (Local Authorities).
Churches.
Women's Institutes.
Newspapers.
Local Radio and Television.
Local Hospital.
School Clinics.
Local Authority Services, such as Parks, Refuse Collection, etc.

Who are the tutors? We found the majority of our tutors were housewives, school teachers or office workers, in the 25 - 40 age group, with very little spare time but a desire to help the less fortunate. The majority found out about our scheme from articles in the local evening newspaper or from their evening class teachers.

Who are the students? Many of our students found out about our scheme from a friend who had learned about it from the local newspaper. Other students learned about our scheme from their work Personnel Officer, Citizens' Advice Bureau or Probation Service. The Employment Exchange also referred a number of students to us. A number of students who were receiving help also brought in their friends who had similar problems.

To keep the volunteer tutors in contact with the Literacy Campaign a newsletter called "CONTACT" is mailed to them at regular intervals. This newsletter is also used for publicity purposes.

No article on publicity would be complete without a mention of the new Literacy symbol, which was designed by the Adult Literacy Resource Agency, the BBC and the National Committee for Adult Literacy. This symbol can be displayed on buildings, beside relevant telephone numbers,

on leaflets and other publicity, letter headings, is copyright free and has been nationally adopted as the symbol indicating various forms of adult literacy provision and can be used by any organisation so involved. Pictures of the symbol are available from the Adult Literacy Resource Agency, 23 Queen Anne Street, London W1M 0AL.



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# Teaching Materials - Resources and Sources

R. J. Kedney and Joan Boyes

The selection and purchase of teaching materials for Adult Literacy Projects is clearly a central issue in the process of decision-making, yet it remains one that is rarely explored. Whilst staff may come and staff may go, boxes or stockrooms of books remain. Having made a commitment to materials, particularly at a point when a project may be making its major investment, be it to get under way, or to spend its allocation of the £1 million, or both, it is likely to be difficult to shift from that decision in the foreseeable future.

The severe limitations on the supply of experienced and trained staff who, through the depth of their own knowledge and skills, can overcome the shortcomings of teaching materials, forces us to consider carefully what guidance and support can be given to tutors. Too often the reading scheme can become more than merely an element in the teaching process, it can become the second crutch to inadequate tutorial skills, complementing that of the drive and motivation of the students.

It is clear that materials are a significant element in the development of any project, and their selection needs to be set in the overall context of meeting the objectives of the scheme. Some account, therefore, needs to be taken of the strengths and weaknesses of the staff, of the interests and needs of both staff and students, and of the proposed development of literacy skills (of which reading is but a part). Rather than merely playing hunches, or using a pin, organisers can attempt a conscious and deliberate exploration of the options, and search for more constructive guides to action. Livingstone,[1] for example, offers the following criteria for materials in developing reading ability:

1. Materials should -

(a) facilitate the promotion of good habits and attitudes by:

(i) matching reading abilities



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(ii) being of suitable interest levels

(iii) being in sufficient profusion [illegible] there to be a breadth and depth of [illegible]ce for students of different abilities and interests.

b) strengthen and sharpen reading skills (the concept of a hierarchy of inter-connected reading skills is accepted).

2. The implementation of the programme should ensure adequate motivation towards good habits and attitudes and ensure development of appropriate skills.

The paper that follows endeavours to consider these concepts, particularly the first two, by drawing on a range of literary sources. To these, however, any project can add the experience and opinions of specialist staff in remedial centres, schools, colleges and libraries. It is likely that such advice will focus on the merits of commercial materials developed for schools, but Verner counsels caution in the use of such materials: "The materials used in adult literacy education programmes are usually patterned after those designed for young children. For the most part, these kinds of materials are all but useless for adults."[3]

This view was given additional support in a recent lecture by Donald Moyle to a group of tutor-trainers.[4] Both argue forcibly for adult materials designed to meet the specific needs of individual adults, who, we are told, are disadvantaged learners who bring to the situation limited learning skills and low levels of tolerance and acceptance.

The logical conclusion to be drawn from such a situation is that the organiser is faced with yet another impossible task, for on the one hand there are tutors with limited training and experience, and on the other, a plethora of school-based materials, apparently of equally limited value. Given these as major resources to be brought to a learning situation, which is characterised by the demands it makes on students, it is clear that every endeavour needs to be made to maximise inputs from the providers. Commercially produced materials are likely to be used as a basic resource, at least at the outset, in order to enable a scheme to begin and to support and provide a medium for tutors. Whilst it may be possible in time to progress to tutor student produced materials, these again may well draw heavily upon stocks that have been purchased.

It is perhaps ironic that one of the most prolific areas of activity amongst publishers today is production of materials both on and for the teaching

of reading, and, additionally, that it should also be one of the major areas of the curriculum where teachers design and produce their own equipment. This paper endeavours to consider the various forms taken by such materials and equipment, to discuss criteria by which they can be judged, and to detail bibliographies and sources of further information.

In considering formulae for beginning reading tuition, Vera Southgate[4] equated reading progress with the combined elements of reading drive, teacher competence, medium, method, materials and procedure. The commitment to purchase materials and a medium, and their links to method, clearly suggests that they form a significant area of decision-making. The process of matching materials to the student as part of the professional approach to curriculum design demands of the providing agency an extensive range of such resources to meet the highly varied and individual needs in any group of students; and of the tutor the skills to select such appropriate materials. However, the subjective opinion of the tutor, alone, often seems to be both limited and of dubious accuracy without some guidance and training, particularly when set in the context of a proliferation of material written for young children with some publishers' claims for suitability for use with adults.

The following guidelines bear the hallmarks of common sense and provide immediate yardsticks with which to measure relevance, and as such, give some degree of classification as to suitability. Whilst they may each have limitations, together they can provide a baseline, and through their unity give a position from which to begin to review and match resources to needs.

Angelica Cass stated that "the production and use of reading matter that has been prepared and written for adults (not children's materials "warmed over") is an absolute necessity".[5] She goes on to identify the following criteria for design:

1. Introduction of reading skills in a manner attractive to adults.
2. Make it important to the learner to master the skills.
3. Provision of reading matter at the user's level of maturity, comprehension and range of ability.
4. Provision of content that relates to the learner's culture, folkways and everyday experiences.
5. Provision for progression at a rate of speed commensurate with the individual's ability.

Naida Waite,[6] when reviewing instructional materials, took an alternative view - the intended use by students, i.e., for review or refresher with



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limited practice; for teaching skills for the first time; or to provide graded and organised exercises. She then went on to undertake an extensive review of the various physical forms of instructional materials. Waite classified such materials under the categories of pictures, spoken words, printed words and physical objects.

Alternatively, material can be reviewed and classified in terms of the intended range of new skills to be learnt or to be practised; a classification based upon purpose in terms of learning gain. In the reading formula noted at the outset, Vera Southgate offered yet another broad division of materials - that of the medium used. Whilst most materials are printed using traditional orthography, a number of innovations have been developed, notably in recent years, signalling systems using colour or marking codes, and of simplified spelling systems such as Pitman's Initial Teaching Alphabet. Though apparently not used extensively with adults in this country, some measured success has been claimed for the latter and a range of such materials is used in the U.S.A. and Canada.

Pantell regards learning interest as being notably significant, and the choice of books as a critical factor, and she states that the choice should not alienate the reluctant reader, but rather be graded, so that the reader gains a feeling of personal success at every step. "Motivation, in other words, is paramount, and motivation may well be embedded in complex social and psychological factors that publishers as well as innovative educators, must learn to face"[7].

The expectations, attitudes and reactions of students are not, however, always what may have been predicted by literate, middle-class tutors, and whilst some students, e.g. - late adolescents, may object strongly to infant school materials, other students are prepared to tolerate such readers. The explanation may lie in their relevance to student needs e.g. if young children are bringing home such reading schemes from school, or if the desire of the student is to conquer earlier failures, or possibly just a tolerance of subject and style of such texts. The complex variety of materials concerned with learning to read, even with guides such as the lengthy table recorded above, still present considerable problems of classification and selection. It is possible here only to touch upon some aspects as illustrations of developments in the field.

In her review of published reading schemes in 1969, Elizabeth Goodacre[8] identified no less than 34 total reading programmes, a number that can quickly be extended by the addition of other blocks of linked reading materials produced by commercial publishers, or added to by teachers. Mary Kendall,[9] in a recent paper, describes how a comprehensive reading

programme can be developed by linking the strength of a combination of such published schemes. If an adult orientation is to be added, then a significant element of tutor-written material will be required.

### Selecting reading schemes

When appraising a reading scheme, the following points are suggested for consideration: No attempt has been made to list in order of importance):

1. What is the reading age range of the overall scheme?
2. What is the recommended level of each book?
3. How many books are there in the series?
4. Which method is employed (Phonic, Look and Say, Sentence, Mixed Method)?
5. Does the material provide:
   a. adequate repetition (consider all repetition in games and supplementary material)?
   b. adequate control of vocabulary (are too many words introduced too soon)?
6. What is the level of vocabulary aimed at in each book and in the whole scheme (approx. how many words is the author attempting to introduce to a student)?
7. Does the interest age stated really relate to your knowledge of your student? Is the content within the student's experience?
8. Are any work books provided? Do they utilise the contents of the story books, or are they devoted to separate skill building?
9. Does the scheme have any pre-reading materials? How should they be used?
10. If pre-reading materials are provided, which skills do they try to teach?
11. Check – size of print,
    – spacing and general presentation,
    – illustration,
    – durability,
    – colour,
    – line span,
    – length.
12. Price - is it worth the money? Will it help the student in the way you want him her to be helped?



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13. When was the scheme first published? Is it still topical?
14. Manual - with detailed advice?
15. List of words included? List of phonic skills included?
16. Will the story content appeal equally well to men and women?
17. Is any attempt made to integrate reading with the other language arts?
18. Can the student effectively assess his her own progress?
19. Can new students be fitted in at any point in the teaching sequence?
20. Is the information content in the text relevant and useful to adult students?
21. Does the reading scheme effectively fit the objectives that have been set by the tutor and student in developing literacy skills?

The total absence of even a single basic reading scheme written for adults is seen by some as a severe handicap, and the strain thrown back on untrained and often inexperienced staff is clearly considerable. It may be, as the Greenleigh Associates Study[10] suggests, that materials alone are not a significant variable in a situation where the range of such materials is considerable. The total absence, however, may have a different effect of some significance for the attitude of tutor and taught, as the outcome can be a reinforcement of the views of inadequacy shared by both. A limited range of supplementary readers aimed primarily at the adolescent market, but with some adult interests in mind, has been published. In addition, the issue of such adult newspapers as "Liverpool News" and "Write First Time", aimed at adults with low reading ability, signals the development of some materials specifically for adults. The success of "Appalachia News" and "Adult Education News" in the U.S.A. suggest that it can fulfil a valuable function, even in an essentially literate and industrial society.

Whilst the problems of non-association and non-involvement of the reader with the material are often highlighted as criticisms of the middle-class childhood images presented by existing reading schemes, other equally relevant issues tend not to be raised, and in any event they often only lead to subjective comment based on limited experience at this stage. There would seem to be little or no consideration of the implications of difference in language usage and the implications it might have for the design of reading materials. Discussion of Bernstein's codes, we are told, often tends to get clouded, but it may be a pertinent factor, both in the written form and its relationship to the adult learner, and in the spoken form between the adult learner and the middle-class tutor.



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Criticism of standardised tests sometimes centres on shifts in language usage over the years, and longitudinal studies[11] on ageing also indicate generational differences; this again may be a factor in some teaching-learning situations. Linked to this can be the difference in vocabulary between adults and children, as identified by Mitzel[12] in her functional reading word-list for adults. The adoption of the Breakthrough to Literacy approach by staff at the Clay Cross Adult Education Centre, Derbyshire, in order to develop adult interest - work packs focussing on topics such as football, cookery and pigeon racing may offer a valuable and interesting model for future practice, taking account of the interests and language styles of students.

The growing range of electronic and other hardware being marketed and/or adapted for use in teaching reading, and with it the necessary software, is perhaps best exemplified in this country by the work at Dinsdale Special School.[13] In the United States the self-programmed learning laboratory[14] has been more extensively developed, and new staffing functions and training needs defined.[15] Standard commercial machinery such as the Language Master, the Synchrofax and the Cassette Tape Recorder, which can link sound and vision, can be extended through the imaginative use of programmed teaching machines, the overhead projector, for writing skills, synchronised slide tape packages, and even CCTV in colleges. It may be that the impact of the BBC's project with two levels of teaching on television and radio will act as a catalyst for the use of such technology in the future. However, whilst Dutton and Seaman[16] discussed the value of such audio-visual aids in a recent paper, Carlson[17] in the same issue of Literacy Discussion, described the simple but effective development of a portable blackboard-cum-display board in Pakistan, thus indicating the considerable value of simple aids.

Much of the above has tended to concentrate on commercially developed and published materials, and only passing reference has been made to the adaptation or creation of resources by tutors and students. Given the paucity of commercial materials for adults, the often-stressed high level of individuality of problems and the need for the involvement of students, clearly the design and use of specific materials for individual students has much to commend it. With the availability of hardware in the form of photocopiers, duplicators, audio-tape and video-tape recorders, and of technician staff in colleges, it would seem highly feasible, given adequate time and skills on the part of tutors, to envisage the creation of college-based materials specifically designed to meet the needs of adult students in localised situations.

The language experience approach is based directly upon the language spoken by students, and hence is the product of co-operative action, but it can lack the structure seen by many as a necessary element of a carefully designed instructional programme. It is, however, of direct relevance to the interests of the student, and clearly adult orientated. As such it may provide a significant motivation. Material which draws from the interests and needs of the student, whether it be the words of pop songs, the vocabulary needed in work situations, or more generalised material such as the simplification of such basic documents as the Highway Code clearly has much to commend it.

Sheldon[18] offers the following suggestions for teachers who are re-writing such materials:

1. Select material which will appeal to a modern reader.
2. Omit words and phrases which represent the sort of archaic reference or obscure point understood only by a scholar.
3. Condense the story by omitting long explanations and long descriptions of a personal nature or of scenery.
4. Develop a basic word-list within the listening, speaking and reading vocabulary of the reader.
5. Reduce compound and complex sentences into simple sentences. Include no more than three or four sentences in a paragraph, so that a thought can be clearly expressed in each paragraph.
6. Avoid slang or colloquialisms of people other than the readers.
7. Try to reproduce conversation which follows the linguistic patterns of the students.
8. Illustrate complex ideas by using pictures, simple analogies, graphs or charts.
9. Provide a simple glossary of terms to be used by the student when reading independently.
10. Test the material on a random sample of ABE students. Delete every tenth word and see if students can supply the missing words.

A significant factor that can clearly be identified in the above commentary is the need to identify material with adults and their interests as well as with their learning needs in terms of literacy skills. In spite of the claims made by publishers, there would seem to be remarkably little evidence of any efforts to ask illiterate adults what their reading interests are;

and what evidence there is conflicts directly with the claims that are often made. Brown's study in the U.S.A.[19] and that of the Job Corps Literacy Programme[20] indicate clearly that illiterate adults in general want utilitarian value from the material they read, focusing on self-improvement, jobs, family and health.

Practical experience suggests that such interests may be diverse and highly individualistic, and whilst the purchase of printed materials needs to match to generalised demands, tutor and student-produced materials can be used to supplement them as guided by individual interests and needs.

Another factor in the consideration of any passage of prose is its level of comprehension difficulty when compared with the student's ability level, and his need to be able to cope with the material facing him. Whilst existing measures do not provide an exact match of both of these, they do offer a rather more accurate comparison than the subjective opinions of tutors. Studies of reading materials have identified a complex range of factors affecting reading difficulty, but in recent years they have focussed on word and sentence length as being the most reliable indicators. Workers have produced a range of formulæ for grading materials, and levels have been standardised on school populations to give grade or reading age levels - these in turn give some comparability with the findings of tests of students' attainments, which are similarly graded.

In the main such tests are based on mathematical formulae of varying degrees of complexity. Fry's Readability Graph offers an alternative based on similar principles. For conversion to English reading ages, five years needs to be added to the American Reading Grade Levels to allow for the pre-school years.

More recently, however, attention has been focussed on the development of Cloze procedure, both as a measure of students' comprehension and of the reading difficulty of materials. This is based on the systematic deletion of words - in the passage on page 96 this is every fifth word - and the reader has to provide either the missing word or a reasonable substitute. Gilliland's[21] study discusses readability in some depth and the Schools Council Project - "The Effective Use of Reading" - is currently[22] undertaking research in depth in schools. Such measures give a guide to the level of difficulty posed by materials and hence can be used both to direct the purchase of materials and to assist in their classification.

**Readability indices**

"In the broadest sense, readability is the sum total of all those elements within a given piece of printed material that affects the success which a group of readers have with it. The success is the extent to which they understand it, read it at optimum speed and find it interesting". (Gilliland: *Readability*, p 12).

Three approaches are being used currently to assess the readability of printed material - an example of each is given below

The three approaches: (1) Mathematical Formula e.g. FOG
(2) Use of graph e.g. FRY
(3) Cloze Procedure.

*The Fog Index* The instruction for calculating this formula are as follows:

(1) Select a number of samples from books or whose difficulty you wish to estimate. Each sample should contain one hundred words. You might for example, take the first hundred words from every tenth page, starting with the first complete sentence.

(2) Count the total number of complete sentences in your sample. Count the number of words in these complete sentences. Then calculate the average sentence length by dividing the number of words by the number of sentences.

(3) Count the number of words of three or more syllables in the total sample. Divide this number by the number of hundred-word samples. This gives the percentage of long words in the sample.

(4) Obtain the Fog Index by adding the:
(a) average sentence length, and
(b) the percentage of long words.
Then multiply this total by 4.

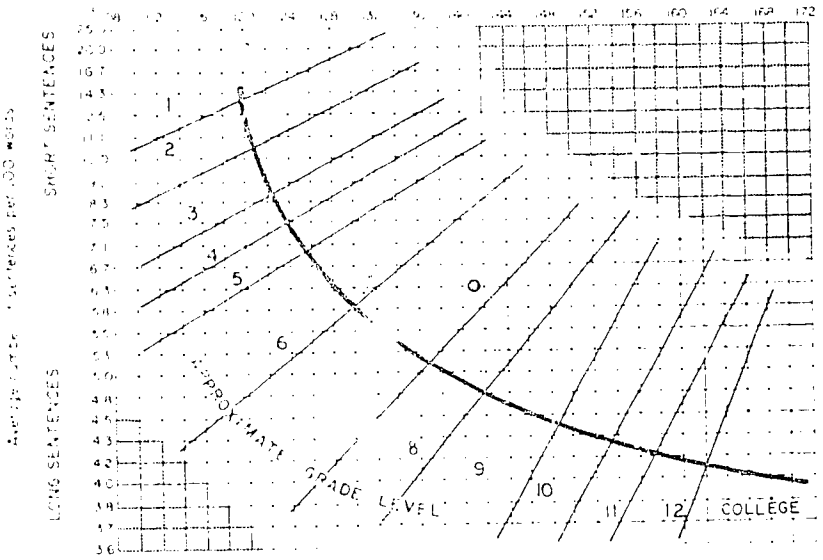
This figure represents the grade level for which the material is appropriate in terms of difficulty, add five for the pre-school years to give a reading age equivalent.

## Graph for Estimating Readability

by Edward Fry, Rutgers University Reading Center, New Jersey

Average number of syllables per 100 words

SHORT WORDS LONG WORDS




DIRECTIONS: Randomly select 3 one hundred word passages from a book or an article.

Plot average number of syllables and average number of sentences per 100 words on graph to determine the grade level of the material. Choose more passages per book if great variability is observed and conclude that the book has uneven readability. Few books will fall in the gray area but when they do grade level scores are invalid.

| EXAMPLE: | | SYLLABLES | SENTENCES |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1st Hundred Words | 124 | 6.6 |
| | 2nd Hundred Words | 141 | 5.5 |
| | 3rd Hundred Words | 158 | 6.8 |
| | AVERAGE | 141 | 6.3 |

READABILITY 7th GRADE (see dot plotted on graph)



For further information and validity data see the April, 1968 Journal of Reading and the March, 1969 Reading Teacher.

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### The Cloze Test

The Cloze Test, sometimes called "context cueing", offers a useful technique for keeping an on-going objective test of students' progress, as well as a guide to matching materials to students' levels of ability. The following procedure has been suggested:

1) Select a passage of prose of about 300 - 500 words from the student's current reading material.
2) Delete every fifth word.
3) Re-write, leaving blanks of equal size for each.
4) Student completes.
5) Score wrong, incomplete, missing responses, i.e., failure to fill the correct words or an adequate substitute.
6) Total correct responses.

Score: If 40% to 60% of the responses are correct, the student has no comprehension problems.

If less than 30% are correct - the student is having problems and the material may, as yet, be too difficult for him.[23]

The example given below provides an illustration of Cloze procedure in use:

### A Cloze Test Passage[24]

Readability formulas have long .... criticised as being neither .... enough to determine the .... of materials for students .. a particular level of .... ability, nor even especially .. measures of reading difficulty. .... addition, they offer no .... on difficulty of concept .... and may well rate .... given selection as easy .... the words are simple .... repeated frequently even though .... ideas may be quite .... Yet the necessity of .... the difficulty level of .... written material appears obvious .... teachers and curriculum builders .... is a real need .... a valid, reliable and .... measure to enable teachers .... determine the usefulness of .... given piece of material .... a particular individual or .... of pupils. Cloze appears .... have considerable promise in .... in the solution of .... problem.

(Answers given at the end of this paper)

If criteria such as those outlined above are applied range of materials currently available, either commercially or tutor-produced, in this country the inadequacy of resources becomes apparent. Many literacy projects are forced back to such basic reading schemes as Ladybird, not because of the preference of primary schoolteachers for familiarity, but because of the lack of adult materials.

The only study of materials in use in this country currently available is that undertaken by Haviland [25] in 1973 as part of a wider survey of provision, and his findings were:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Children's Books | noted by | 70% | of the respondents |
| Materials for Backward Readers | ,, | 80% | ,, ,, |
| Newspapers/Magazines | ,, | 72% | ,, ,, |
| Comics | ,, | 17% | ,, ,, |
| Tutor-made Materials | ,, | 85% | ,, ,, |
| Job or Skill Related Materials | ,, | 41% | ,, ,, |
| Tape-recorded Books | ,, | 37% | ,, ,, |
| Official Forms | ,, | 41% | ,, ,, |
| Highway Code/Car Related Matter | ,, | 46% | ,, ,, |
| Flash Cards/Word Games | ,, | 77% | ,, ,, |
| Other | ,, | 14% | ,, ,, |

Before a significant outlay of money, and hence an on-going commitment is made to materials, considerable and careful thought is clearly necessary, for such a move can influence the structure of the teaching programme significantly. The following sources of information may therefore provide some reference as to what is available, and some descriptions of the nature and usefulness of materials.

**Sources of information**

1. The National Association for Remedial Education (NARE) keeps a register of all types of facilities for adult non-readers in England and Wales. The register is kept up to date and available from:

N.A.R.E., 4 OLDCROFT ROAD,
WALTON-ON-THE-HILL,
STAFFORD

as are all their publications.

Some useful Publications from NARE are:

1 – "Adult Illiteracy".
2 – "Aspects of Adult Illiteracy" - including the register mentioned earlier £1.00.
3 – "An A - Z List of Reading and Subject Books".
4 – "Preparing Reading Materials".
5 – "Games to Develop Reading Skills".
6 – "A Classroom Index of Phonic Resources. £1.65.

All the other publications are priced at 50p each.



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A "Newsletter" dealing with topics relating to Adult Illiteracy is published twice yearly by the Adult Illiteracy Sub-Committee.
Subscriptions (20p for one year) should be sent to:

Mr. M. GORDON,
BOWSTONES,
CHURCH LANE,
KIRK ELLA,
NR. HULL.

2. The United Kingdom Reading Association (UKRA) has produced a number of books on Reading and a series of Bibliographies and Monographs written in readable style on various topics of interest to teachers of reading.

The Association also produces a termly journal called "Reading", and a "Newsletter". All enquiries to:

MR. STANLEY V. HEATLIE (UKRA),
63 LAUREL GROVE,
SUNDERLAND. SR2 9EE
COUNTY DURHAM.

3. A Folder consisting of some extremely useful Information Leaflets is obtainable from the:

CENTRE FOR THE TEACHING OF READING,
29 EASTERN AVENUE,
READING,
BERKS. RG1 5RU.

A Booklet priced £1 entitled "Survey of Provision for Adult Illiteracy in England", by Michael Haviland, and including a Directory of Literacy Instruction Programmes is also obtainable from the above address.

4. THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF SETTLEMENTS,
7 EXTON STREET,
LONDON. S E 1.

They have a kit of "Information on the Organisation of an Adult Literacy Project" - price £1.

5. NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (NFER),
2 JENNINGS BUILDINGS,
THAMES AVENUE,
WINDSOR,
BERKS. SL4 1QS.

Various publications by the NFER - e.g., "The Trend of Reading Standards" (1972) by K. B. Start and B. K. Wells.

6. REMEDIAL SUPPLY CO.,
DIXON STREET,
WOLVERHAMPTON.

This company has a wide selection of inexpensive materials for remedial work. Their cassettes and tapes include Listening Tapes, Sound Discrimination, Oral Comprehension, Spelling, Phonics 1 - 2, Sentence Building, Matching Tapes.

7. WEST SUSSEX COUNTY PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT,
COUNTY HALL,
CHICHESTER,
SUSSEX.

Various booklets - 18p each - including titles such as "Phon ics" "Teaching Non-Readers", "Assessment of Reading Ability".

8. ADVISORY CENTRE FOR EDUCATION,
32 TRUMPINGTON STREET,
CAMBRIDGE. CB2 1QY.

9. NATIONAL BOOK LEAGUE,
7 ALBERMARLE STREET,
LONDON W1X 4BB - For exhibitions and book-lists.

10. HELEN ARKELL DYSLEXIA CENTRE,
14 CRONDACE ROAD,
LONDON. SW6 4BB. - Leaflets and materials.

11. "A Booklet for Volunteer Tutors" by T. MacFarlane, published by -
EGE HILL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,
ST. HELENS ROAD,
ORMSKIRK,
LANCASHIRE.

12. "Liverpool News"
WATERLOO BUILDINGS,
CASES STREET,
LIVERPOOL 1.

13. "Write First Time" -

DR. SUSAN SHRAPNEL,
141 TARBOCK ROAD,
HUYTON,
NR. LIVERPOOL.

14. THE DEPARTMENT AND FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF SWANSEA, has produced several publications reporting reading research - e.g., Occasional Publication 3 - "Compensatory Education and the New Media" explores the use of audio-visual material, TV etc., in the development of reading readiness and skills.

These publications are obtainable from:

SINGLETON BOOKSHOP,
COLLEGE HOUSE,
UNIVERSITY OF SWANSEA,
SINGLETON PARK,
SWANSEA.

15. THE ADULT LITERACY ASSOCIATION,
c/o MR. C. O'BOYLE,
SPRINGWOOD ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE,
SPRINGWOOD AVENUE,
HUDDERSFIELD. HD1 4BH.

This is a recently formed Association whose aim is to promote and support the teaching of literacy to Adults.

16. THE ADULT LITERACY RESOURCE AGENCY,
33 QUEEN ANNE STREET,
LONDON. W1M OAL.

In addition to managing grants drawing from the £1 million, the Adult Literacy Resource Agency is also publishing newsletter and tutor-training materials.

17. THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION,
BROADCASTING HOUSE,
LONDON W1A 1AA.

In addition to the radio and television broadcasts the BBC is publishing materials for tutors and students.

18. THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADULT EDUCATION,
33 QUEEN ANNE STREET,
LONDON W1M 0AL.

NIAE publishes "Adult Education" and "Teaching Adults"; recent issues have contained references and articles on adult literacy.

*Answers to the Cloze Test Passage*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 been | 2 accurate | 3 suitability | 4 of | 5 reading |
| 6 valid | 7 In | 8 help | 9 load | 10 a |
| 11 because | 12 and | 13 the | 14 difficult | 15 evaluating |
| 16 particular | 17 for | 18 There | 19 for | 20 simple |
| 21 to | 22 a | 23 with | 24 group | 25 to |
| 26 aiding | 27 this | | | |

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2 *Coolie Verner - "Basic Factors in Learning to Read and Write" - Literacy Discussion. Winter 1974 - UNESCO.*

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5 *Angelica Cass - "Materials and Methods for Adult Literacy Programmes" in "Literacy Discussion" - IIALM / UNESCO. Volume 11, No. 3 - 1971.*

6 *Naida Waite - "Instructional Materials for ABE" - in "Adult Basic Education - A Resource Book of Readings". Ed. W. M. Brooke - New Press Toronto 1972.*

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8 *Elizabeth Goodacre - "Published Reading Schemes" - in "Educational Research" - Volume 12, No. 11 - 1969. NFER.*

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*Ed. - W. Griffith and Ann Hayes - University of Chicago 1970.*

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15 *R. Ast - "The Recruitment and Training of Professional Staff for an Adult Basic Learning Center" - in "Adult Basic Education: The State of the Art".*

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17 *E. Carlson - "Teaching Aids for Adult Literacy Teachers - Literacy Discussion" - Vol 11 No. 3 - 1971. IIALM/UNESCO.*

18 *Quoted by M. V. Berry - "Selected Instructional Materials for Use in Adult Basic Education" - in "Adult Basic Education" - ed. W. M. Brooke - New Press, Toronto 1972.*

19 *D. A. Brown - "The Reading Interests of Adult Basic Education Students" - in "Adult Basic Education - The State of the Art". - ed. W. S. Griffith and Ann Hayes - University of Chicago - 1970.*

20 *W. LaPlante - "The Reading Program - Civilian Conservation Centers" - in "Strategies for Adult Basic Education" - ed. J. Pagano - IRA 1970.*

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24 *C. Harrison - The Schools Council Project - The Effective Use of Reading - University of Nottingham - July 1974.*

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# Tutors and Their Training

**R. J. Kedney**

"The key is sensitized teachers; the teacher is crucial. There is a need for growing professionalisation of adult educators who understand the physiological, sociological and psychological implications of adult under-education."[1]

Few in this country are likely to disagree with Richard Cortright's commentary on the primary need in Adult Basic Education in the United States and Canada. Adult literacy programmes clearly represent one of the most rapidly growing areas of demand for skilled staffing since they are highly labour-intensive and lack, as yet, a supporting structure based on any depth of experience or research which may provide a stable view of the teaching-learning situation or materials designed specifically for it.

A number of authoritative figures have placed the training of tutorial staff at the centre of any qualitative development of provision. Vera Southgate-Booth has stated that, in her view, "teacher-training, both initial and in-service, is a crucial issue and probably the most important factor affecting the reading ability and general language development of children, students and the whole adult population".[2] Pagano lays similar stress on off-the-job training when he states that "from observation there is strong evidence that pre-service and more especially, in-service training and supervision are paramount requirements for teachers, regardless of background".[3] He goes on to observe that "because there are few persons in any community who have had experience in teaching the economically and socially deprived adult, all teachers entering adult basic education should be given an intensive pre-service training course for this endeavour".[4]

The Adult Literacy Resource Agency has clearly recognised this need since it set the development of training programmes as a high priority for training in the expenditure of its famous £1 million. The development of regional training programmes for tutor trainers,[5] the preparation of advisory and resource packs for initial, short courses[6] and studies of existing training programmes,[7] may prove to be useful assets, as indeed

may the radio series for would-be volunteer tutors that are to be broadcast in the Autumn. However, all such resources tend to be generalised in their nature and to have evolved outside the individual literacy project that may be proposing to use them; as such, they will tend to fit only where they touch.

It is clearly of paramount importance that any and every opportunity for tutor development needs to be recognised and grasped purposefully, particularly if school-related experience is considered. "One does not assume that one can sufficiently train a remedial reading teacher for the public schools (state education in U.S.A.) in two weekend workshops, as has sometimes been the case in adult basic education. On the contrary, it is felt that remedial reading teachers should have had prior classroom experience and then generally a master's degree level programme to be duly able to work with disabled readers at the elementary and high school levels. Should one really expect to accomplish the training task in much less time for a teacher who is to work with adult beginners?"[8]

Whilst the answer to Ames' challenge may be clear, we have to live in the reality of today and in the context in which we have placed ourselves. The selection, placement and training of tutorial staff is likely to prove a major activity in literacy projects in the near future and to be on-going. If the staffing situation stabilises to any degree, the additional element of in-service training and on-going support to staff are then likely to be added to the process.

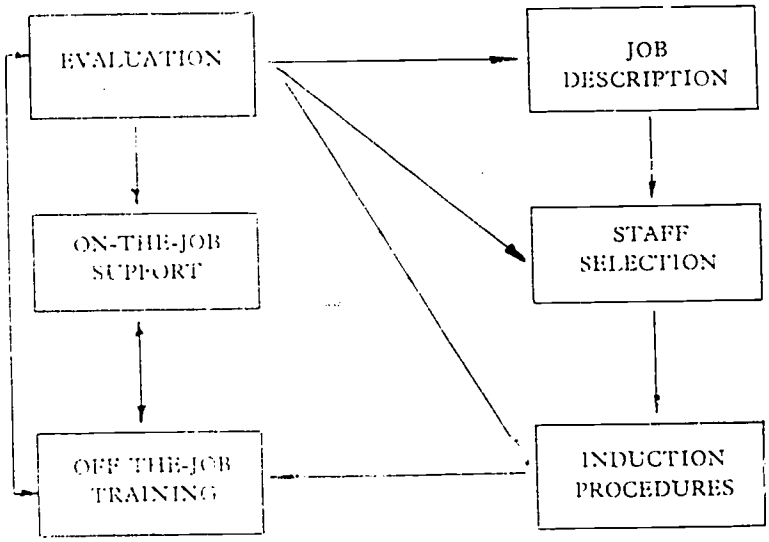
If such a sequence of activities is viewed from the tutor's perspective, it becomes clear that the development of ideas, knowledge and attitudes begins not at the first training session but rather before any contact is made. Tutors are highly sensitive to their need to learn from the outset and read carefully both on and between the lines of any written information, interviews and training sessions.

The utilisation of such resources as are seen to exist in planning tutor-training clearly needs to be related to the specific roles to be performed by individual tutors, set within the specific context of known projects, and within an overall policy of staff development. The subsequent selection of training activities will represent, therefore, only the overt element of endeavours to raise the standards of tuition in an area of educational activity that is marked by a history of earlier failure. Many existing plans seem to isolate formal training activities through concern for the immediate problems of growth rather than to set them in an on-going context. The overtones of 'never mind the quality - feel the width' are at times all too self evident.

If a model of staff development such as that described below is adopted, training programmes become related to an on-going pattern of activities. The attitudes, as well as the skills and knowledge, that are listed as desirable may thus be more positively influenced. At the centre of any such policy must be the philosophy upon which it is based, and which is reflected not only through the organisation of the scheme and the tuition received by students, but also the guidance, both direct and indirect, that is given to staff. The clarity, or otherwise, of such a policy is likely to be reflected through the efficiency or inefficiency of the providers in their pursuance of such objectives.

**Diagram 1**

**A staff development programme**



In any consideration of tutorial staff and their training, a number of stages can be defined, each providing a foundation for the next to build upon. Each point of contact enables both tutors and project organisers to gather information and formulate impressions, which in turn are evaluated, as lessons are learned. Potential tutors are often particularly sensitive to cues plucked from the ethos as the basis for formulating their attitudes, though their sensitivity may be lessening with familiarity and experience. Whilst it is tempting to relate the formation of attitudes to these early stages, the development of cognitive knowledge to formal training programmes, and the enhancement of skills to practice situations, it is unlikely that such a gross oversimplification can provide a meaningful base on which to plan a staff development policy. Each needs to be balanced at each stage as they interlock, and to be understood as such by organisers as a basis for any positive action that is to be taken, rather than the apparent touching faith placed in isolated, off-the-job training packages, of both the induction and in-service types. Diagram 1, (Page 105) illustrates one such sequential approach to staff development which endeavours to place training courses into a wider context.

(*i*) *Job description*

It would seem obvious that any process of staff development would begin with an endeavour to define the demands of the task with some clarity through the preparation of a job description. Practices, however, seem to differ; yet it is difficult to conceive how any training programme can be seriously planned without some consideration of the roles to be filled. Whilst we may lack the practised skill of colleagues in industry, it should be possible to define a number of the characteristic demands made by such tutorial posts as the literacy project[9] evolves.

The written form of the job description serves not only to clarify the thinking of project organisers and trainers but also to provide an initial screen of potential tutors. It should provide a clear guide to would-be staff as to their role and thus guide their expectations; for unless they already know colleagues working in the project, it will be their major initial guide as to what is expected of them.

(*ii*) *Staff selection*

The analysis of the job description will provide a short list of checkpoints, some of which will be deemed desirable, some peripheral and others crucial; if current trends are followed such factors may in turn be classified as cognitive or knowledge, psycho-motor or physical skills and attitudes and used as a basis for training.[10] This stage of staff selection,

often through interviews of varying degrees of formality, is regarded as one where the interviewer considers the range of tasks to be performed and endeavours to divine whether the interviewee already meets the criteria set as being crucial, or whether the project can provide adequate training in these areas. Putting to one side a number of obvious assumptions, it should also be clear that the interviewee is also receiving information about the project and the role to be fulfilled. The training process has moved on a step further and first impressions formulated and reinforced.

(*iii*) *Induction procedures*

The placing of the first point of contact of new tutor and student is one of much debate, for it is felt that the key to induction training may hinge upon it. Whether to train first and match, or to match tutor and student and then train in the light of real experience, or to begin training and allow the dog to see the rabbit, as it were, whilst training is under way, will vary from project to project. In some instances, it is possible to practise some model of internship whereby new tutors serve under the guidance of experienced staff as voluntary aides in group teaching situations.

In any event it is clear that new tutorial staff are likely to be keenly aware of their need to become familiar with the procedural patterns of any project, of their role in it and how they are to start. At this stage much has to be learnt, and is learnt, of the day-to-day details of administration and of the philosophy of the scheme through what is seen to be done. Formalised induction procedures are likely to hinge upon the staffing patterns of projects and it is clearly easier where senior/advisory tutors or team leaders are used to established contacts which can focus on professional rather than administrative functions. Nevertheless, all new tutors are likely to need the support of a professional tutor, particularly during their first period of tuition.

(*iv*) *Off-the-job training*

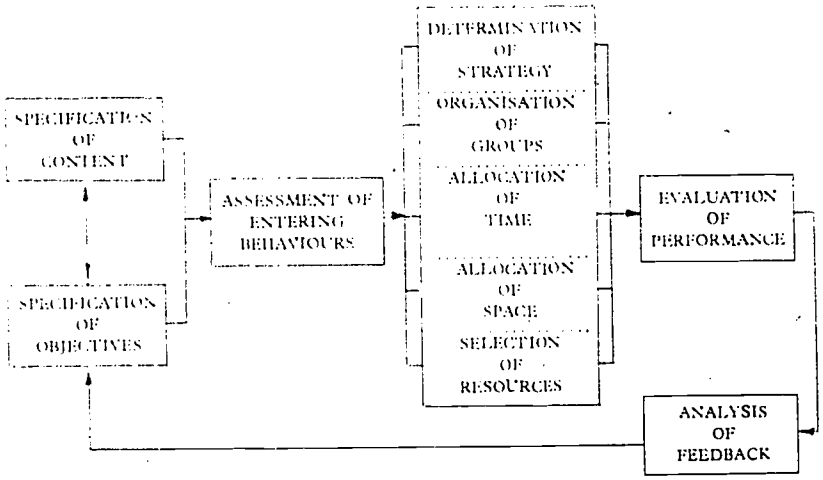
Formalised training courses are often equated totally with staff training and development because they represent the deliberate and specific actions of organisers. In the context outlined to date it is clear that such activities can form a significant crystallisation of ideas and energies but not the totality of training. With the current rapid expansion, considerable thought is being given to induction programmes, often in isolation from any other activity, and rarely, it would seem, within any on-going developmental policy. A number of established schemes are building a pattern of staff meetings, staff libraries, newsletters and other

activities such as the preparation of book revues and criticisms of internal distribution. It is clearly necessary to relate initial training patterns to such on-going activities and that both should be natural outgrowths of the needs diagnosed at the earlier stages of selection and induction.

The current focussing of attention on such facets as the length of induction courses (four or eight evening meetings for example), and more particularly on content, seems strangely at odds with educational thinking and planning in other sectors and with the needs of the staff. The following diagram serves to illustrate as an example the interaction of a number of elements found in any training programme which need balancing if their dependence and influence on each other are to be recognised.

**Diagram 2**

**A systematic approach to training**[17]



Through such a design the necessity of the needs of the students, the training needs of the tutors, the total pattern of training activities and the full width of resources that can be drawn in becomes clear. In a short induction course, even with the support of such resources as tutors handbooks, training packs and radio programmes it is only possible to provide, at best, a survival kit for new tutors. In a relatively stable teaching situation staff are likely to require continuous support if the quality of provision is to be enhanced; in a situation where initial preparation is minimal and the teaching environment rapidly evolving and changing it would seem critical to the process.

The subject of off-the-job training provision, particularly in a new area of activity, clearly warrants study in-depth, study beyond the scope of this paper. Organisers of projects need to recognise the centrality of such an issue and the strengths and weaknesses of the resources they are able to bring to bear. The foregoing stages of meaningful selection, of recognising training needs, and the initial preparation of tutors can do much to enhance the success of early training programmes.

In a field of activity characterised by the need for a high level of sensitivity and skill in interpersonal relationships and in the teaching of reading, it is clear that whilst books, tapes and working papers are useful, meaningful training can only come through controlled practical experience. Tutors can only develop sensitivity and skill through practice and role-play; case-studies and micro-teaching exercises[13] are likely to be at least as necessary as lectures in training programmes. Trainers, therefore, need to look to the design and adaptation of activity-based learning exercises tailored to the needs of would-be tutors, set in the particular context of their own scheme. Such exercises are likely, in their turn, to tap the immense resources of local knowledge of felt and perceived needs and of the direct and relevant experience of the trainees. The training programme can build not only from what is known and felt by the participants but also move forward in the desired direction, influencing their knowledge, skills and attitudes through first-hand experience and involvement in a controlled environment.

(v) *On-the-job support*

It may appear that, with careful staff selection, induction training, in-service meetings, book lists, materials workshops, staff meetings, news letters and conferences, there is little need for further action. Such formalised activities at fixed points in time give opportunities for the development of themes in some depth, but they lack the necessary instant, or very close, relationship in time to needs as they arise in the teaching-learning situation. Occasions are likely to occur when advice is required immediately as to a particular approach to a teaching problem, a need for

counselling, or a reading activity and in a brief rather than a protracted form. In these instances, recourse to immediate advice and support is needed which does not fit the fixed pattern of off-the-job training.

Continuous advisory support will, of necessity, be matched to the organisational pattern of the literacy project. In team-teaching situations it is likely that the continuous support of colleagues will provide much of the needed on-going advice and stimulus so that referral to outside agencies with the ensuing time-lag is relatively rare. By contrast the dispersed pattern of home-based tuition necessitates a careful infrastructure of support which can, in part, only be met by the allocation of advisory/supervisory tutors to small teams of volunteer staff.

(*vi*) *Evaluation*

As can be seen from Diagram 1, evaluation and feedback of information to and from trainers and trainees is a continuous part of the process of staff development rather than a separate element placed at any given point in the sequence. Evaluation will be formalised through specific activities, e.g., the formal interview, and [informal; it will also be an inevitable part of the processing of information by all concerned.

In a formal context, specific exercises and techniques clearly lend themselves to particular situations, the formal face-to-face interview, and the end-of-course questionnaire[14] being the most obvious. The suggestions box and staff meeting discussions provide other formal modes of feedback and commentary which may impinge directly upon staff development. It is often claimed that much of the most valuable work on training courses is done over coffee or in the bar; much the same can be claimed for the continuous interaction of staff in less formal settings. Such informal evaluation is an inevitable part of a training process and the degree of opportunity for social interaction and exchange may be a critical factor in any pattern of planned training. Feedback loops need to exist and organisers to act upon the evaluation of training.

If one accepts the views expressed at the outset that the teacher is a crucial resource, that quality should be the by-word for any literacy project, and that inherent in any formal educational activity is a belief that formal learning can be influenced, it is self evident that staff development is an essential part of any project. Isolated training courses which are, to a lesser or greater degree, sensitive to the particular needs of individual tutors and tutorial situations, are unlikely to prove adequate in the rapidly evolving pattern of adult literacy provision today. The need is for an overview of a programme of staff development that is sensitive to the needs of tutors and that grows generically with the growth of literacy tuition itself. Such an approach demands, first and foremost, a degree of foresight and planning on the part of project organisers and a tapping of the experience and resources within the training group.

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4 *Ibid Page 72.*

5 *E.g., the 15 day short course to be run by the Bolton College of Education (Technical) starting in June 1975 and extending through the Summer and Christmas terms.*

6 *Available in the late summer from the National Literacy Resource Agency.*

7 *E.g. "Adult Literacy Tutors - Their Characteristics and Training", editors R. J. Kedney and Elaine F. McMinnis - Lancashire County Council 1975.*

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10 *J. Niemi and C. Davison - "The Adult Basic Education Teacher - A Model for the Analysis of Training" - Adult Leadership February 1971.*

11 *E.g. "Helping Adult Non-Readers" - notes on a short course held at Cassio College, Watford - October/November 1974.*

12 *V. Gerlach and D. Ely - "A Systematic Approach to Instruction". Prentice Hall 1971.*

13 *E.g., the exercises described in the reports noted above - references 7 and 11.*

14 *See for example the report included in "Adult Literacy Tutors - Their Characteristics and Training".*

# Evaluation: Students and Projects

R. J. Kedney

When undertaking a journey one needs to know where one is going, how to get there efficiently, and how to recognise when one reaches the destination; simple truths, but earlier papers illustrate some of the problems and pitfalls inherent in planning a route through the literacy jungle. Whilst tutors and organisers seem able to state aims in general terms, thus indicating a general sense of direction, their translation into definite objectives seems to elude practitioners. Formal evaluation in such a context is, therefore, also limited to either broad generalisations or narrow details, whilst informal judgements have continually to be made. Yet regardless of the limitations, some measurement of progress is an inevitable element of any activity and at its best it can enhance efficiency.

Mezirow et al. recognise the centrality of evaluation: "Most administrators and teachers in adult basic education (ABE) are well aware that they are pioneers in an undertaking of major social value: the job of helping under-educated adults extend their education as a means of enjoying a fuller and more rewarding life. These administrators and teachers, therefore, strongly want to improve their ABE programs. But, to improve something, you need to understand its strengths and weaknesses. This is where evaluation comes in".[1]

Clearly central to any evaluation programme is some measure of the learning gain and attainment levels of students, but such information needs to be set in the complex range of inter-acting elements of the teaching-learning situation; additionally, much can perhaps be gained from studies at the macro-level of the project itself. Standardised tests, even with their apparent limitations, offer instruments to measure the former; studies of enrolment patterns, dropout rates and attendance levels from registers, together with interviews and questionnaires, offer some approaches to the study of the latter. Such information as can be gained, when set against the total complexities of the total situation, may appear inadequate but it extends both the narrow subjective opinions of participants and the growing stock of basic knowledge. In so doing it may serve to identify further questions and point to further avenues of study, thus developing again a sense of direction.

The current national controversy over the trend of reading standards that has followed the publication of the national survey carried out by Start and Wells[2] (1971) and more recently of the Bullock Report,[3] has highlighted the need for accurate evidence of attainment. Bullock states: "There is no firm evidence upon which to base comparisons between standards of English today and those of before the war, and the comparisons ventured are sometimes based on questionable assumptions".[4] To this could perhaps be added the fact that many adult literacy projects equally have no firm evidence of the incoming or outgoing levels of attainment of their students, other than the vague opinions of the participants. Against this Naida Waite argues that, "Testing is an important element in most of the large-scale formal ABE programs (in Canada). Achievement testing aids in initial placement. It provides a means of diagnosing the difficulties, it indicates progress, it gives a basis for certification, and small tests give the student almost daily feedback".[5] By gaining details of entry levels of literacy skills of students and any shift after tuition, some evaluation of learning gain can also be measured.

A number of standarised tests are currently available, based in the main on school populations, though some tests designed for, and standardised on, adults developed in the U.S.A.[6] are also available. The short bibliography by Turner[7] provides a recent and inexpensive summary. In the main they tend to be confined to aspects of reading skills only, though some such as those developed by Murphy[8] and Louis Harris and Associates Inc.,[9] take as their baseline some measure of effective functioning as an adult in a modern society.

Existing tests have been the subject of much criticism and the Bullock Report, in commenting on the two tests used to take national samples by the former Ministry of Education and the present Department of Education and Science, states that, "We do not regard these tests as adequate measures of reading ability. What they measure is a narrow aspect of silent reading comprehension".[10] The report does, however, whilst questioning their validity due to the narrowness of the area tested, accept their reliability, a view not transferred by some workers to the adult literacy sector since the reference groups for norms are children in school.

R. C. Droegge,[11] in his review of testing disadvantaged adults, lists the following eight requirements for an adult achievement test:

1. Choice of content - towards adult needs and skills.
2. Appropriateness of content for adults.

3. Format and directions with an adult orientation and for ease of use.
4. Time limits - to be set as short as is reasonably possible.
5. Flexibility - to cover a wide range of ability and skills.
6. Appropriate reference group - an appropriate adult population.
7. Occupational norms - linking it to real-life needs.
8. Relationship to other tests - should be high when compared with parallel tests.

Karlsen accepts that "one of the most frequently discussed issues in adult achievement testing has been the problem of norms. Many teachers of adult basic education have expressed the opinion that grade norms are for children in the grades and are not suitable for adults".[12] Adults are patently not children, nor are they being educated in a school-based system; yet Karlsen proceeds to argue for the continued use of grades since they are meaningful to tutors, and for the acceptance of such norms due to the limited accesses to adult populations with low attainment levels which would make standardisation difficult, if not impossible.

Given the need for effective instruments with which to measure attainment, and the limitations of individual tests, it is not surprising that Principal Recommendation No. 1 of the Bullock Report should be for a system of monitoring which will employ new tests "to assess a wider range of attainments than has been attempted in the past and allow new criteria to be established for the definition of literacy".[13] In the meantime the careful combining of existing tests to form a battery to cope with a range of skills and levels can be done effectively, as the Army School of Preliminary Education has illustrated.

The foregoing has focussed on evaluation of the learning gain of individual students as this is clearly a fundamental issue in any adult literacy project; yet it is but one area of feedback and measurement. The study of the pattern of learning gains by all students, such as that carried out by Shrewsbury Technical College, may provide some evidence for further thought, as indeed may a similar review of attendance patterns, drop-out rates and recruitment patterns. Other exercises can perhaps be regarded as extending into action-research since they call upon concerted efforts. Evaluative studies of teaching materials such as those carried out by Greeenleigh Associates[14] or Calvert Steuart[15] provide valuable, basic information and guidance in specified areas. Others such as the study by Brown[16] and by the Job Corps Literacy Program[17] of the evaluation of the reading interests of illiterate students can easily be simulated at local level to some effect.

Perhaps the most significant resource that has recently been made available in this field has been the guide and instruments published by Knox, Mezirow et al[18] In it they offer a range of rating forms, data forms and questionnaires concerning project directors, teachers and trainers as well as areas of activity such as classroom interaction and in-service training directly concerned with adult basic education. The authors pose the question, "Why evaluate your program?", and proceed to offer the following answers:

"One benefit is simply that someone is considering whether the most important evaluation questions are being asked. Another is the greater likelihood that evaluative judgements will be based on adequate information. A third benefit is that persons in a position to improve the programme are more likely to know about the evaluative judgements and to be committed to using them".

Whilst we may enter into the development of adult literacy provision with little more than a hope, a prayer and the spur of the BBC project, it would seem incumbent on any educator to learn his or her own lessons through evaluating any activity and to use such experience in developing an enhanced sense of direction in the future. Evaluation, whether informal or formal, efficient or inefficient, would seem an integral part of any educational act.

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1 *A. B. Knox, J. Mezirow, C. G. Darkenwald and H. Beder - "An Evaluation Guide for Adult Basic Education Programs" - Center for Adult Education, Teachers' College, Columbia University 1974, page 1.*

2 *J. Start and S. Wells - "The Trend of Reading Standards" - NFER 1971.*

3 *Bullock Report - "A Language for Life" - HMSO 1975.*

4 *Ibid, conclusion No. 1, page 515.*

5 *Naida Waite - "Testing in ABE Programmes: An Introduction" in "Adult Basic Education" - editor W. M. Brooke - New Press, Toronto 1972. page 322.*

6 *For example The Adult Basic Education Student Survey: Follett Publishing Company, Chicago, or Dr. E. H. Smith - "Literacy Education for Adolescents and Adults" - Boyd and Fraser, pages 43 to 55.*

7 *J. Turner - "The Assessment of Reading Skills" - UKRA 1972.*

[8] *R. T. Murphy - "Adult Functional Reading Study" - US Department of Health Education and Welfare - 1975.*

[9] *Louis Harris and Associates Inc. - "The National Reading Difficulty Index" - The National Reading Center, Washington DC - 1971.*

[10] *"A Language for Life" - page 16.*

[11] *R. C. Droegge - "Testing Disadvantaged Adults" - in "Adult Basic Education - The State of the Art" - editors W. S. Griffiths and Ann Hayes, University of Chicago, 1970.*

[12] *B. Karslen - "Educational Achievement Testing with Adults: Some Research Findings" - in "Adult Basic Education - The State of the Art" page 100.*

[13] *"A Language for Life" page 513.*

[14] *See J. Pagano - "Teachers in Adult Basic Education Programs" - in "Strategies for Adult Basic Education" - editor J. Pagano. IRA 1969.*

[15] *R. Calvert Steuart - "An Evaluation of the Educational Effectiveness of Selected ABE Materials" in "Adult Basic Education - The State of the Art".*

[16] *Don A. Brown - "The Reading Interests of Adult Basic Education Students" in "Adult Basic Education - the State of the Art".*

[17] *B. J. Argento - The Job Corps Literacy Program" in "Strategies for Adult Basic Education".*

[18] *A. B. Knox et al - "An Evaluation Guide for Adult Basic Education Programs" - see note 1.*

# Part Four

## Looking to the Future

# The Design of Literacy Projects - Some Variants

**R. J. Kedney**

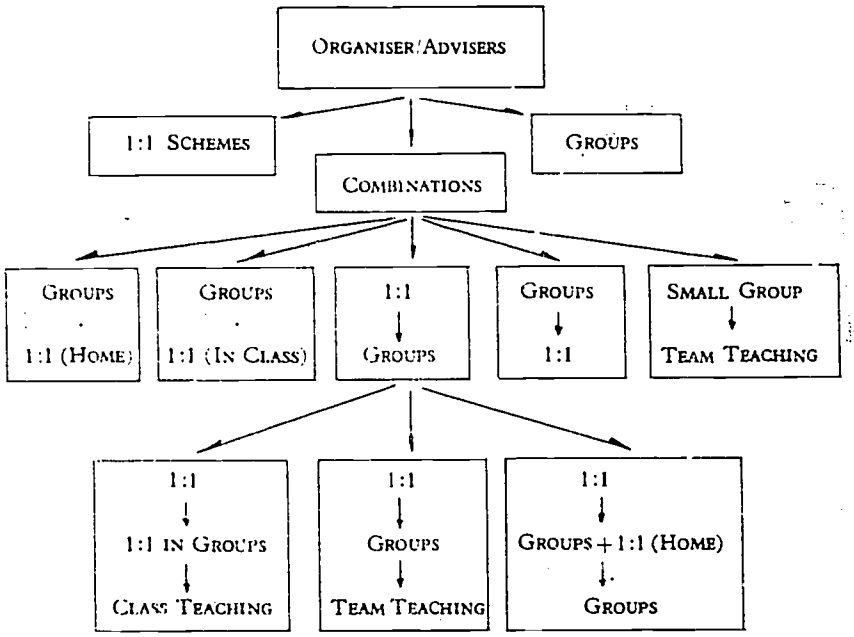
As more knowledge is gathered about designing provision for adult illiterates, the more it becomes apparent that the field is characterised by the immense diversity of the needs of the potential students. At the same time, it is also becoming increasingly clear that the onus for establishing patterns of provision that not only maximise opportunities for entry for hesitant students, but that also build a sound foundation established from the underpinning philosophy of the providers, lies with the managerial staff of the colleges. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that activity in this field represents one of the more difficult areas of post-school education, demanding as it does enterprising and flexible development.

The case studies in Part Two serve as illustrations of the variety of responses at the varying organising levels of the lea, the college and the college department, within the settings of different communities. Clearly the range of potential variables such as providing agencies, meeting places, times, staffing and student groupings is considerable and the following serve only to illustrate some existing and potential further developments. At the provider levels, illustrations have already been given in the college-based sector; to these can be added the work of adult education centres, the voluntary organisations, universities, the WEA and colleges of education. In terms of providing agencies, the latest NARE survey[1] shows clearly the heavy degree of commitment of the lea's through adult education centres and colleges. However, in any locality the concerted co-ordination of a number of providers can give an extensive range of resources drawn from the departments of the local authority and voluntary organisations.

Much of the current work tends to take place in centres providing either 1:1 based tuition, often home-based, or small classes, or through team teaching. Few centres have as yet developed a range of opportunities linking such differing approaches.

A number of such variables are illustrated in Diagram 1 and many can be traced individually, being practised in varying parts of the country. For example, the use of volunteer helpers who hear students read in homes the work that has been set on another evening of the same week by the class teachers has been developed in Ulverston, Cumbria. The initial use of home-based volunteer tutors, followed by the gathering together of such tutors and students, and then the eventual withdrawal of the volunteer tutors as classes are formed is often discussed in principle but is as yet less fully developed. Similarly the highly flexible arrangements offered by team-teaching situations with individualised programmes based on audio-visual technology is often discussed, but is as yet underdeveloped, though examples such as the work at Newton-le-Willows and Nuneaton, Warwickshire, serve as useful illustrations of such work. As yet, however, we have no parallel to the fully developed learning laboratory with individual programming based on a computerised guidance system as has been developed in the USA.

**Designing of Literacy**
**Project - some variations**



Whatever form of organisational structure is adopted, staffing will be a key resource and clearly in a teaching-learning situation the tutorial function is central. Just as differing organisational responses are being identified as offering a variety of opportunities, so too can tutorial and support staffing roles be separated and developed in order to maximise resources. The following tables suggest a number of such functions; in some schemes individual functions may be vested in individual members of staff, in others some functions may be linked, but it is difficult to conceive how any one person can effectively administer the extensive range of activities that some individuals currently endeavour to cope with.

**Staff Roles**

| Role | Notes |
|---|---|
| Primary tutorial staff: | |
| Group Tutors | In classroom situations |
| 1:1 home-based tutor | Isolated tuition, i.e., not under direct guidance |
| ATC Instructor | Working with mentally handicapped adults |
| Learning Lab. Director | e.g., paper by Ray J. Ast |
| Tutor Trainer | and on-going advisory function |
| Secondary tutorial staff: | |
| Group based volunteer | Staff briefed to provide an effective supporting climate and ancillary tuition, e.g., listening to adults read. |
| Family | |
| Hostel Warden | |
| Nurses/Therapists, etc. | |
| Paraprofessional aides | |

**Support staff roles**

| Role | Notes |
|---|---|
| Manager/Organiser | Project designer and director |
| Advisory Tutor | Master Teacher and/or advisory team |
| Curriculum Designer | Concerned with building balanced programmes |
| Counsellor | Initial contact and on-going referral point |
| Diagnostician | Concerned with initial placement, guidance and evalutation of teaching materials, particularly of local content to provide on-going studies and project evaluation |
| Writer | |
| Action Researcher | |
| Clerk | Vital roles, needed to under-pin the above, sometimes performed by voluntary staff |
| Technician | |

Whilst it is often necessary for any specialist officer to fulfil the role of another in order to effect the necessary action quickly, the continuation of such practices may warrant some review. Over-specialisation may lead to a narrow, blinkered perspective which can only be countered by some degree of generalisation. Clearly, the development of effective projects lies in balancing these extremes, but it is highly questionable as to how far many projects are effectively served in a balanced manner at present in terms of the relationship of staffing to the tasks to be performed.

A similar analysis of the range of potential student needs in the community and the formation of organised responses may lead to an enhanced understanding and meaningful response to such needs. At present much provision presents a highly heterogeneous image and attracts a variety of responses. The adult with literacy problems has to decide whether "Basic English" or "Help with Reading and Writing" applies to his or her particular requirements. The addition of spelling helps with an analysis of the range of skills to be taught, and if courses leading to RSA or GCE English are included some indication of level may be deducted from a leaflet.

The following tabulations may serve as illustrations as to potential student groupings; these in turn may influence recruitment, the decision to include or exclude some groups in the formation of teaching units, and also indicate the range of factors that can be identified in any such analysis. It may be that the oft-found practice of heterogeneous recruitment leading to heterogeneous teaching units will be continued but with a clearer understanding of their relationship to the community being served and their implications for the tutors. Or it may be that some changes are effected to recruit specific groups and form teaching units to cater for one or more of such groups.

**Student groups - based on employment**

| Contact Points | Literacy Programme | |
|---|---|---|
| *Factories* | In-Company | : Developed in U.S.A. and for immigrant population |
| | Industrial Language | : orientation to special needs |
| *Shift Workers* | Factory-based | : at shift change-over times |
| | College-based | : based on out-of work hours |
| *Dept. of Employment* | Pre-TOPS | : already developed in some F.E. colleges |
| | Unemployed | : linked to Employment Exchanges |
| *Referrals* | Social Workers<br>Doctors/Priests | } similar to above, linked to employment opportunities. |

**Student groups - based on institutions**

| Contact Point | Literacy Programme | |
|---|---|---|
| *Social Services Dept.* | A.T.C. based<br>Classes | : In the Adult Training Centre<br>: held in the college |
| *Hospitals* | Mentally Handicapped<br>Mentally Ill | } similarly held in the hospital and/or the college |
| *Prisons/Borstals* | In Institutions<br>On probation | : Already serviced-bridging link<br>: through Probation Officers |
| *Immigrant Communities* | e.g. Men/Women<br>e.g. Asian/European, | : of religious implications<br>: of recent and post-war immigrants. |

**Student groups - based on community recruitment/ levels of need**

| Contact point | Literacy Programme | |
|---|---|---|
| *Community* (i) | e.g. Parents<br>e.g., Male/Female | : through school links, based on needs<br>: through interests cf. below |
| *Community* (*ii*) | e.g., Housewives<br>Pensioners | : daytime provision and specific needs<br>: daytime provision |
| *Colleges* | F.E. Students<br>VIth Forms | : esp. intermediate level needs<br>: study skills needs, higher literacy levels |
| *Industry* | Managers<br>Writers | } Specialist literacy demands which tend to be self-taught. |

Clearly not all of the above are to be found in any individual project. For example, those that focus on basic, low level skills would not cater for the demands of students who are literate in general terms but have specific, functional needs. Nevertheless, they may serve as illustrations of potential areas of need in any community. If educational programmes based on literacy skill needs are to be developed, there may be some advantage in considering extending the form of analysis proposed above at some early point in the evolution of a response to such needs.

In concluding this consideration of examples of the range of alternative elements that impinge upon the design of literacy projects, it is perhaps worth noting two further small but sometimes significant factors. Much

stress has tended to be placed on the nature of the providing body and its institutional, or non-institutional, image and rather less on such mundane points as the timing and geographical location of meetings. The former is touched upon in the tables above where links with factory working hours or school times for parents and housewives are noted, but a simple survey of the class times of six providers in a single urban area showed that entry to the ten classes that were offered was limited to 7 p.m. on two evenings per week; an inflexible arrangement that is remediable.

The location of provision for literacy teaching has been alluded to by a number of speakers at conferences when they have made reference to either the institutional image of the providing body, or the desire for anonymity that has led some students to travel to localities where they will not be known. If the principle of maximising opportunity of entry for those least able to make the first move is pursued, both are valid points. The image of the provider is clearly pertinent, but often over-simplified; for some it may be, as is claimed, difficult to return to the very school where they think they failed but for others the conquest of such failure is important. In some instances the relationship of the old 'Junior Tech' with its warm and friendly relationship with the artisans of the community or 'the college of knowledge'[3] reputation of the further education institution with an open-door policy makes the college an excellent base for provision. However, centralisation on a single base, whilst it gives maximum utilisation of physical resources, opportunities for social interaction, absorption into the mainstream of post-school education, ease of administration and an image of "normality", also limits the entry points. Economically deprived students may genuinely not be able to afford to travel, and the additional time-load of travelling after work and inaccessibility may inhibit the first contact. The planned development of literacy cells throughout the geographical area being served, based on a range of establishments such as a college, schools, libraries, clubs and pubs, factories et al. could do much to extend such a range of entry points.

The issues touched upon above are clearly only some of the points that come to mind when thinking shifts from traditional patterns of further education provision to the needs of the disadvantaged. Many of the issued raised can be illustrated by examples of practices in varying parts of the country, ranging for example, from the pub in Beverley and the College of Education in Sunderland to the dispersed work of the University Settlement projects. The implications of breaking from the comparatively recent traditional pattern of provision to meet the needs of the disadvantaged and disenchanted makes new demands on the imagination

and resources of the providers. By placing the student first and designing initial provision to meet his or her demands, some valuable lessons may also be learned by those making such provision.

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[3] *e.g., The local name for Nelson and Colne College of Further Education, Lancashire.*

# The Lancashire County Programme: Proposals for a Programme of Action and Development

**R. Gray and D. Selby**

*Any consideration of provision can be regarded as a process whereby educators reach decisions and act upon them; rarely however would it seem that even relatively simple logistic exercises play any significant part. Robin Gray compares quantification to trying to count the number of angels that can dance on the point of a needle - and then progresses to face the challenge. The authors of the working papers that follow offer not only a fascinating study of some statistical perspectives of the problem facing their local education authority, but also an interesting organisational approach to the provision of instruction: Editor.*

*The story so far*

thanks to the efforts of some local authorities, universities and bodies such as the British Association of Settlements, the problem of adult literacy is now recognised as existing;

the government has made available a million pounds which is being disbursed for purposes of training and equipping teachers of adults who have reading and writing problems by an agency under the direction of Bill Devereux, formerly ILEA's adult education chief;

the BBC is taking a major initiative by broadcasting on radio and TV a series of programmes aimed both at the adult non-reader and at his would-be teacher;

in Lancashire, sporadic work has been done in this field for at least two years in various Colleges and Adult Education Centres. In most cases, classes with small groups run parallel with one-to-one volunteer teacher schemes;

it is known that in most areas where nothing yet exists, schemes are under active consideration and it is believed that help and guidance will be welcome. This document tries to meet this need.

*The local problem*

quantifying the problem is like trying to count the number of angels that can dance on the point of a needle. Notwithstanding this, we need to try to assess the scale and scope of the problem we face;

| | |
|---|---|
| one 'guesstimate': total population of Lancashire .. .. .. | 1,400,000 |
| ∴ adult population (20 - 60 years) .. .. .. | 690,500 |
| ∴ adult illiterates (assuming validity of estimated 2% of national population) .. .. .. .. .. | 13,810 |
| ∴ average number of adult illiterates per district c. | 1,000 |

what proportion of these will be stimulated by the BBC programmes and other national and local publicity is anybody's guess. District and Area estimates of demand will be found in the Appendix 'A' to this paper;

the problem has been dropped squarely into the lap of the Adult Education service by the Authority and the Government.

*Coping with the problem*

We shall find many varieties and degrees of illiteracy: the complete beginner, unable to read or write more than a few simple words; the semi-literate, with the reading attainment of the average 7-9 year old; the non-speller, who may read reasonably well. We shall meet many different causes of the disability: low intelligence; a history of interrupted schooling; physical handicap such as hearing, speech or visual problems; psychological blocks to learning. As in all adult education, potential students will be a heterogeneous group, with a typical range of motivations but an untypical set of inhibitions and frustrations.

The problem is complex as well as large and unlikely to be solved by one type of provision. It seems likely that there will need to be in each locality some or all of the following (much of which exists in some places already):

in-Centre beginners' classes with a trained teacher and (volunteer?) assistants;

in-Centre reading development classes;

in-Centre languag classes (up to 'O' level GCE);

in-Centre language classes for immigrants;

one-to-one teaching (by volunteers?) directed by trained tutor/organisers which can take place anywhere mutually agreed by student and teacher;

any or all the above may be provided in locations other than Centres, e.g., factories, prisons, hospitals, residential hostels, youth or old people's clubs, Working Men's Clubs, etc.

*Staffing implications*

Combining the estimate of nearly 14,000 potential students with the above suggestions for meeting their needs, it will be clear that the staff needed will be both numerous and in need of training. Whether teaching is offered in classes or in one-to-one situations, a ratio of one trained, paid, professional to twelve students will be desirable, that is, approximately 80 teachers or tutor/organisers on average per district. If all students are to have a personal (volunteer) tutor, 1,000 on average per district will have to be recruited and trained. This sort of calculation makes it immediately obvious that within the present financial limits (£15,000 in County estimates and £1m to be shared by all LEA's through the Government's Adult Literacy Resource Agency) we cannot hope to meet all the possible calls upon us at once. £25,000 from the agency will be applied for - if this application is successful, Lancashire will have a total of £40,000 for 1975-6. What compromise between needs and resources can be made in the light of the alternative costings outlined in Appendix B?

*A training programme*

The following programme depends on two assumptions: (1) volunteer tutors will need training and supervision by paid staff ('tutor/organisers'); (2) class teachers and tutor/organisers will themselves need training. The latter (training the trainers) exercise will be undertaken by a group which has been named the 'Task Force', consisting of the senior county and the area advisers for further education, a full-time member of staff from each District who has been or will be responsible for the development and control of adult literacy provision, and from each area two 'consultants' who will, it is hoped, provide the technical expertise in the skills of teaching reading and writing. This Task Force will meet at the new Residential Adult Education College at Chorley on the weekend 9 - 11 May, 1975, to prepare a training course which will be offered to Tutor Organisers in each of the five areas of the county.

Each of these courses will train up to 30 tutor/organisers who in their turn will be expected to train and supervise up to twelve volunteer tutors who will work either in class or in a one-to-one home-based situation. If

the programme is fully implemented - and this of course depends on successful recruitment of Tutor/Organisers and volunteer tutors - it will result in a force of 150 paid part-time Tutor/Organisers and 1,800 volunteer tutors: this will allow us to cope with approximately a tenth of the estimated total demand.

*A timetable*

It is most unfortunate that the BBC's radio transmissions for training tutors will not commence until after the programmes aimed at learners start. We obviously cannot wait for the BBC before starting recruiting and training tutors. The programmes will be recorded and will be available for the second generation of tutors and for continuing in-service training of the first generation.

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Task Force' at Chorley Adult College | 9-11 May, 1975 |
| Area training team course planning | May-June |
| BBC Tutor recruitment starts | May |
| District recruitment of Tutor/Organisers | May-June |
| District recruitment of volunteer tutors | July |
| Training of Tutor/Organisers starts | mid-June |
| T.O's residential training week-end | September |
| Training of volunteer tutors starts | end August |
| BBC literacy TV programmes start | 21 October |
| BBC tutor training Radio programmes start | 28 October |
| Referral of students per BBC | ? November |
| Registration, assessment and placing students | November |

*Administrative responsibilities*

Schemes will be based in Adult Education Centres or Adult Education Departments of Colleges of F.E.

Head of Department, Principal or other member of full-time staff should be given responsibility for local scheme.

District Officers will place recruitment advertisements in consultation with scheme organisers.

Tutor/Organisers will be interviewed and appointed by D.E.O., F.E. Adviser, H.O.D./Principal and staff in charge.

Volunteers will be interviewed and appointed by staff in charge and tutor/organisers.

Training of T.O's by Area Teams (Adviser, consultants and staff in charge). Training of volunteers by T.O's and staff in charge.

*Finance*

Full-time staffs' duties will be arranged to include work in connection with literacy schemes. No extra payment will be made for this work.

Tutor organisers will be employed for up to 6 hours per week at 'C' rate of pay, i.e., £4·99 for 2 hour session plus 0·15p per hour 'threshold' payment.

Volunteers will receive travelling expenses only.

T.O's salary to be set against College or Centre's teacher-hour allocation.

Training costs will be borne by county funds.

**Appendix 'A'**

*District populations*

| District | (a) Total | (b) Adults (20-60) | (c) 2% of (b) | (d) 50% response | (e) No. of T.O's (1/12 of (d) ) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 123 | 61·5 | 1230 | 615 | 51 |
| 2 | 95 | 47·5 | 950 | 475 | 39 |
| 3 | 86 | 43·0 | 860 | 430 | 36 |
| 4 | 152 | 76·0 | 1520 | 760 | 63 |
| 5 | 67 | 33·5 | 670 | 335 | 28 |
| 6 | 135 | 67·5 | 1350 | 675 | 56 |
| 7 | 85 | 42·5 | 850 | 425 | 35 |
| 8 | 93 | 46·5 | 930 | 465 | 39 |
| 9 | 78 | 39·0 | 780 | 390 | 32 |
| 10 | 141 | 70·5 | 1410 | 705 | 59 |
| 11 | 81 | 40·5 | 810 | 405 | 34 |
| 12 | 97 | 48·5 | 970 | 485 | 40 |
| 13 | 86 | 43·0 | 860 | 430 | 36 |
| 14 | 62 | 31·0 | 620 | 310 | 26 |
| County | 1381 (000) | 690·5 (000) | 13810 | 6905 | 575 |

*Area populations*

| Districts | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 & 2 | 218 | 109·0 | 2160 | 1080 | 90 |
| 4, 5 & 6 | 354 | 177·0 | 3540 | 1770 | 147 |
| 7, 8 & 9 | 256 | 128·0 | 2560 | 1280 | 107 |
| 3, 10 & 11 | 308 | 154·0 | 3080 | 1540 | 128 |
| 12, 13 & 14 | 245 | 122·5 | 2450 | 1225 | 102 |
| County | 1381 (000) | 690·5 | 13810 | 6905 | 575 |

**Appendix 'B'**

*The cost of illiteracy October 1975 - March 1976*

| | | £ |
|---|---|---|
| Scheme 'A' | One teacher to five students in a classroom. If 700 students enrol 140 teachers will be required 140 × (£4·23 + £0·27 + £2·00) × 24 .. .. .. Teachers' salary, travel, materials, classes. | 21,840 |
| Scheme 'B' | One teacher to twelve students, each with a volunteer in the home. Teacher requires four hours per week to visit. There are 700 students. 60 × (£8·46 + £0·54 + £2·00 + £2·40) × 24 .. .. Teachers' salary, travel, materials, vol. travel, classes. | 19,296 |
| Scheme 'C' | One teacher to twelve students each with a volunteer in a classroom for two hours per week. 700 students. 60 × (£4·23 + £0·27 + £2·00 + £2·40) × 24 .. .. Teachers' salary, travel, materials and vol. travel. | 12,816 |
| | | £53,952 |

The cost of training

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Scheme 'A' | £20 per head (approx. 20 hours training) × 40 + travelling expenses. .. .. .. .. .. .. | 3,000 |
| Schame 'B' | £30 per head (approx. 30 hours training for literacy skills and working with volunteers) × 60 + travel = £2,000. £45 per twelve volunteers (6 hours initial training and 2 hours every 4 weeks = 18 hours) × 60 + travel = £3,500 .. .. .. .. .. .. .. | 5,500 |
| Scheme 'C' | Similar to Scheme B but cheaper on travel .. | 5,000 |
| | | £13,500 |
| | Grand Total | £67,452 |

**Appendix 'C'**

*Staff Training Cost Estimates*

1 'Task Force' (County)
Residential seminar 9-11 May '75 at Chorley for 5 advisers, 14+ full-time staff responsible for literacy schemes in Districts, 10 expert reading 'consultants' (2 per area), HMI etc.

| | |
|---|---|
| Total 30 @ £7·00 Chorley College rate .. .. .. .. | £210·00 |
| Travelling @ £1·00 per head .. .. .. .. .. .. | 30·00 |
| Materials .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. .. | 50·00 |
| Total .. | £290·00 |

2 Tutor/Organisers' training course (Area)
4×2 hours sessions +residential week-end for 30 T.O.s and training team of 5.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Week-end: | 35 @ £7·00 Chorley College rate .. .. .. | 245·00 |
| | Travelling @ £1·00 per head .. .. .. .. | 35·00 |
| | Consultants' fee 2×£20 .. .. .. .. | 40·00 |
| Evening Sessions: | Salary of consultants 2×4 @ £4·99 .. .. | 39·92 |
| | + threshold 2×8×0·15 .. .. .. .. | 2·40 |
| | Travelling 35×4 @ £1·00 .. .. .. .. | 140·00 |
| | Materials 30 @ £2·00 .. .. .. .. .. | 60·00 |
| | | 561·31 |
| | | ×5 |
| | Total (5 Area courses) | £2806·55 |

3 Volunteer training course (District)
8×2 hours sessions (in line with BBC format) for 12 volunteers with T/O and f/t A. E. Staff.

| | |
|---|---|
| Salary of T.O. 8 @ £4·99 .. .. .. .. .. | 39·92 |
| + threshold 8×2×0·15 .. .. .. .. .. | 2·40 |
| Travelling 13×8×0·50 .. .. .. .. .. | 52·00 |
| Materials 13 @ £2·00 .. .. .. .... | 26·00 |
| | 120·32 |
| | ×150 |
| Total (150 district courses) .. .. .. | £18,048·00 |
| Total training costs .. | £21,144·55 |

*Literacy scheme budget 1975-76*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| County estimates | £15,000 | Training .. .. .. | £21,144·55 |
| Government agency | £25,000 | Equipment .. .. | £5,000.00 |
| | | Salaries etc. for T.O.'s | £13,865·45 |
| | 40,000 | | £40,000·00 |

## The Army Approach - A Case Study

*The paper that follows describes one of the most highly developed responses to the need for literacy tuition in the post-school sector yet undertaken in this country. The Army's School of Preliminary Education continues to pioneer a professional and systematic approach to instruction which offers a model worthy of study in some depth. Whilst the situation is clearly specifically concerned with the development of a curriculum to meet the peculiar needs of Army entrants, it exemplifies studious approaches to a number of basic issues which are shared with literacy projects based in the community at large.*

*The recent explosion of interest in the problems associated with adult illiteracy has resulted in SPE being inundated with requests for information, and for places on Visitors' Days. This situation has become extremely time consuming and disruptive of the educational task. It is, therefore, regretted that enquiries can no longer be answered by a personalised letter and that additional places on Visitor's Day cannot be provided. It is hoped that the following paper will provide at least most of the answers. Editor.*

# The Army's Approach to the problems of Soldiers with Reading Disabilities

**Background**

The problems of the soldier with impaired literacy were well known to the members of the Army Educational Corps long before the start of the Second World War, but it was not until 1943 that co-ordinated action was taken to provide remedial education within the Service. In that year the Army Council authorised the establishment of Basic Education Centres to attack the problem of accidental illiteracy in the vastly expanded war-time army. But the problems did not disappear with the ending of the war - in fact in the conscript army of the late forties and early fifties the incidence of learning disabilities increased to a level where one in five recruits was semi literate and one in fifty totally illiterate. When the five-year Regular engagement was introduced in 1951, it became necessary, because of the numbers involved, to confine instruction at the Preliminary Education Centres now established in all Home Commands, to regular soldiers. There was a further rationalisation of the Army's provision in this field of educational work when the six Preliminary Education Centres were amalgamated in 1956 to form the School of Preliminary Education (SPE) initially at Tidworth but now located at Corsham in Wiltshire.

As far as the Army is concerned therefore, the problems attendant on coping with adults with learning disabilities have not burst upon the educational scene in recent years, as has been suggested of the civilian field, but they have appeared as part of a slower process moving from the needs of a conscript army to that of a regulaur force; from the needs of the young adult in the 1940's to those of his counterpart today; from the more simple needs of yesterday's Army to those of the more scientific and mechanised force of the 1970's.

One of the fundamental problems facing this modern Army lies in the field of recruiting. How to attract enough men of the right calibre to handle the increasingly complex equipments now in use, and able to react sensibly in the difficult individual situations which even the private soldier faces today? One partial solution adopted has been for the

Service to accept a number of men who although performing badly in tests of educational attainment have scores on selection tests that suggest they are capable of improvement both in educational skills and employability in the Army. The tight-knit nature of the military community generated an early awareness of the situation and, because of its autonomous nature, it has been possible for the Army to seek independent solutions to the problem of assimilating these men. Consequently the Service, and the RAEC in particular, has acquired a valuable body of experience in coping with under achievement in the basic skills.

The SPE, established to improve these skills, has existed in its present form, more or less, for almost twenty years, and it can therefore claim to have acquired considerable expertise in dealing with young adults with impaired numeracy and literacy. Since December 1970, the Unit has been geared to cater for an entry of 500 students each year and at any one time there are up to 120 soldiers on the ten and a half week course.

## Present policies

*Aim and function*

The current charter states that the aim of the SPE is to raise the student to a standard in language and numeracy skills acceptable to the requirements of the Service. In fulfilling this aim, the School simultaneously seeks to achieve two further incidental aims, namely:

a. to improve the employability of the man within the Army;

b. to ease this usually less able man into Service life.

Unless recruiting improves significantly, there will always be a need to select the man who is just below the required standard. Furthermore, whatever the Army's standard for entry there will always be a marginal man in need of an initial boost and whilst the skills taught at SPE are related to today's borderline candidate they can be readily adjusted to accommodate changes in the intellectual capacity of the entrant.

The skills which the SPE sets out to improve are:

a. reading aloud;

b. reading for understanding;

c. spelling;

d. oral communication skills;

e. the four rules in number and decimal money.

This paper is concerned only with adult literacy.

*Selection*

Some 21% of applicants for the Army are rejected at the Army Careers Information Offices (ACIO) because they fail to meet the rather modest standards of a short pencil and paper test which seeks to assess powers of reasoning, grasp of arithmetic and command of English. 9% fail to reach the minimum standard for the Army, 12% fail to reach the cut off for the arm or trade in which they had hoped to enlist.

From ACIO's, potential recruits (already a selected group) go on to the Recruit Selection Centre (RSC) at Sutton Coldfield where for three days they are subjected to a more elaborate screening process aimed at establishing their suitability for various trade groups within the Service. The screening procedure includes a test battery comprising:

Dominoes – a test of reasoning ability and innate intelligence. It is non verbal and does not depend to any great extent on the literacy or educational standard of the recruit.

Problems – a measure of mechanical comprehension and aptitude for mechanical work.

Arithmetic – assesses elementary numeracy and numerical aptitude.

Verbal – spelling, comprehension and verbal facility.

Instructions – a verbal intelligence and potential learning ability test.

Recruits whose summed results in this battery of tests place them in the bottom 30% of the intake are then given the NFER NS 6 test to determine their approximate reading age and suitability for a course of remedial education. Those with a raw score below 30 (Reading Age approximately 10 years 9 months) or with a raw score below 35 (Reading Age 12 years), coupled with a poor score in the arithmetic scale of the test battery, are recommended for the SPE course. Currently the number of recruits so recommended is in the region of 800 per year and this total includes some 15% of the Infantry intake and some 48% of the Royal Pioneer Corps intake. A small minority of students are recommended for a course other than by RSC. In the main these are older soldiers whose disabilities become evident when they are considered for advancement in their Units.

*The students*

The majority of students come from deprived social or domestic backgrounds with contributing factors such as very large families, divorced parents, foster homes and other conditions which influence a child emotionally and intellectually. Some of these factors are known to affect the quality and quantity of mother-child interaction considered crucial in the acquisition of language and other intellectual skills, and subsequent failure in the classroom and a lack of parental encouragement gradually leads to the development of an antipathy towards school and associated intellectual pursuits. The dependence on others and denial of opportunities for gaining information produce in many men marked behaviour reactions. Some become unduly suspicious and unco-operative, others are extremely subservient and inferior and are unable to use their talents effectively; still others are compensatorily rebellious, defiant and difficult. There is clear evidence of some contributing environmental factor in the histories of 94% of SPE students, many of whom, in addition appear immature, lacking in confidence, uncommunicative and unco-ordinated.

Of 452 students who attended the School in 1973:

15% were from families of 8 or more children;

55% were from families of 5 or more children;

29% suffered at risk conditions such as broken homes and illegitimacy;

9% were culturally different.

*Testing*

All students who attend the School have weaknesses in verbal ability and many also have deficiencies in handling basic number and in order to determine precisely the nature of these impairments a series of tests is administered to each student on arrival. The tests are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Daniels & Diack Test of Graded Reading Experience | – to provide an approximate reading age |
| Schonell Spelling | – to provide an approximate spelling age |
| Corsham Arithmetic | – to diagnose difficulties in basic number. |

For the average student the results of these tests, together with the information gleaned from the report of the Personnel Selection Officer at RSC, is sufficient for an instructor to determine the general area in which a student should start work.

Should the information obtained prove inadequate or should the student fail to make progress, other tests are available. The second level tests applied to determine areas of difficulty more precisely include:

Daniels and Diack Standard Reading Tests;

Schonell Diagnostic Reading and Arithmetic Tests;

Neale Analysis of Reading Ability.

Very occasionally it is necessary to obtain still more detailed information and in this event the Chief Instructor will administer one or more of the range of tests available to him. The tests most frequently administered at this third level are:

The Wepman Auditory Discrimination Test;

The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale;

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

If non-verbal intelligence test scores are used as the best estimate of learning capacity, a number of interesting facts are revealed for students who are of British Culture. For instance, the distribution of non-verbal intelligence in SPE students approximates quite well to the normal distribution, although there is a comparative short fall in the top 10% of the normal curve and there are considerably more students in the group just below average than in the normal curve. Some 33% of SPE students are of above average ability whilst 67% of students have non-verbal IQs of 90 or above.

Initial tests administered at SPE indicates a poor level of educational attainment summarised as follows:

Mechanical Reading Ability - using the Holborn Scale

| Reading age below 7 years (illiterate) | 7 to 9 years (semi-illiterate) | 9½ to 13½ years (literate but not complete reader) | above 13½ years (complete reader) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2·6% | 39·3% | 52·8% | 5·3% |

Spelling - using the Schonell test.

| Spelling age below 7 years | 7 to 10 years | above 10 years |
|---|---|---|
| 8·2% | 70·6% | 21·2% |

From the numbers discarded during selection procedure and the figures above, it will be apparent that the Army does not in fact accept the lowest educational level of the nation. In terms of mechanical reading ability indeed it can be said that the truly illiterate man is not enlisted (the 2·6% classified as illiterate above are accidental enlistments, who, somehow or other slipped through the net). Furthermore according to the standards defined in 1938 by the Ministry of Education and still accepted today, only the minority of SPE students can be classified as semi-literate.

*Course grouping*

After testing, students are allocated to an Instructor Officer who will have about 15 men in his group. This Instructor Officer is not a class teacher and there is no provision for formal class teaching in the SPE timetable. Instead, using the details elicited from test results, the instructor is able to pin point the particular weaknesses of each man and to set for him each week a personal programme of study.

Although the whole function of the SPE is one of remediation, there is within the Unit a Remedial Centre to which some students requiring specialist help are allocated. These students usually fall into one of the following categories:

a. The least able readers, often with specific reading difficulties;

b. Students who have a significant disparity in test scores;

c. Mature students with specific difficulties.

*Content of Course*

The course is primarily geared to individual work in the classroom in the four basic skills of mechanical reading, for understanding, arithmetic and spelling. Where, as is frequently the case, a man presents disabilities in a number of these skills, priority is given to reading. The School has a most effective tool for teaching this skill in the shape of a twenty-four booth Language Laboratory.

As an integral part of the course there is also an element of military training aimed at increasing the student's experience and building up his self confidence. This comprises drill, physical education, games, adventure training, swimming instruction for non-swimmers, and hobbies, together with important training in social skills.

The success or failure of the course largely hinges on the intimateaffective relationship which develops between the course officer and his students. For many students, this appears to be the first time an individual in authority has given attention and sympathetic guidance in such diverse matters as the acquisition of social skills, social interaction, morality and general educational development.

Determination and the will to work are difficult to define and to isolate and cannot be measured. The concept of achievement motive has been extensively studied and in general terms concerns the desire of certain people to do a job well for its own sake. The vast majority of SPE students need assistance if they are to acquire such a habit and so, in all aspects of remediation, officers follow a strategy evolved over the years and closely related to modern research. It is:

Begin with an easy task where success is certain.

Praise the success.

Devise weekly programmes so that students can gradually be introduced to more difficult tasks where success is less likely and praise is given less frequently.

**The skills and their treatment**

Over the years there has been a steady accumulation of material produced by the staff, and by further selection and improvement the assignments now in use, although not yet perfect, reflect the years of experience and refinements of controlled evolution. In recent years, the growing awareness of social disadvantages and the application of instructional technology combined with the use of the hardware of modern education have been blended to develop an appropriate course for this particular population of students. In essence the course seeks in a humane and efficient manner to teach those skills necessary for modest educational attainment. These enabling skills are dealt with separately in the following paragraphs under the headings of:

Mechanical Reading;

Reading for Understanding;

Spelling;

Communication Skills.

They are treated separately in order to give the reader some insight into the various methods used at Corsham.

*Mechanical reading*

The Daniels and Diack Test of Graded Reading Experience and the NFER NS6 test provide information that allows placement of a student on one of three reading assignments. These reading assignments extend in difficulty from a reading age of 5¾ years to the complete reader at 13¾ years. The assignments are arranged in three booklets at three levels:

Level 1 RA 5·09 years to 6·09 years;

Level 2 RA 7 years to 9 years inclusive;

Level 3 RA 9·03 years to 13·09 years.

Each assignment has its own pre-test in order that reliability errors of the other reading tests can be adjusted prior to the student beginning work.

The reading scheme evolved from the Clifton Audio-Visual Scheme and has been developed in the School. It is based on the work of Charles Fries and is linguistic in its approach. Using a variety of reading tests, an analysis has been made of the various initial, medial and final graphemes, or written units of sound, and their particular chronological point of acquisition in development. The original programme covered the complete range from a reading age of $5\frac{3}{4}$ to a reading age of $13\frac{3}{4}$ years. This has since been revised and emphasis is now placed on the important $5\frac{3}{4}$ to 9 year bands where an individual is acquiring basic reading skills. The higher level is covered in assignments designed for revision of earlier material and to provide wider reading experience. A sight vocabulary of military words is included at each level with words being introduced gradually in order of word length. Each individual assignment is presented audio-visually. The grapheme in a printed text is presented visually and accompanied on tape by the corresponding phoneme. The student reproduces the sound and if necessary writes the grapheme at the same time. The grapheme/phoneme association is then practised by introducing various words containing it. The words are then introduced in sentences and the whole rehearsed again audio-visually. After five or six graphemes have been introduced, practised and learned, the student reports to his instructor who checks the work and makes any necessary adjustments.

Each course spends approximately four hours each week in a Language Laboratory practising these skills. In the laboratory there is an additional instructor and the staff student ratio therefore drops to about 1 to 7. Checks can be carried out by an officer through the Language Laboratory console or by the individual attention of the second instructor.

*Reading for understanding*

Over the years a variety of materials has been used at the SPE to improve comprehension skills, and although a set pattern exists, instructors are encouraged to introduce personal preferences within this framework. The Science Research Associates (SRA) Reading Laboratories were taken into use in 1969 to improve the understanding of written passages. This material, although of American origin, gives the student an opportunity to practise reading and comprehension skills at his own level with every confidence of success. The SRA laboratories include power builder and rate builder cards. The power builder cards are designed to increase vocabulary and comprehension whilst the rate builder cards are designed

to speed up the student's reading for understanding. Most students lack experience in working against the clock in reading and writing and this seriously limits their success in any timed verbal test even when the questions are within their reading range. The variety of work in the power builder series relates to other aspects of the course and the cards thus form a useful central core around which a number of additional exercises can be planned. Although SRA produce their own placement tests for their laboratories, instructors at SPE use D & D and NFER scores to place students at appropriate starting positions. Students maintain their own record sheets carefully and accurately and they are, of course, checked regularly by the instructor.

Until very recently, a basic problem facing the teacher of the adult with reading difficulties was to obtain material with an adult interest level which maintained a relatively low readability level. Over the past few years some substantial progress has been made both in the production of suitable reading material and in devising formulae for estimating readability. The method used at SPE to determine the readability of a text is devised by Edward Fry of Rutgers University. Fry's system makes use of a syllable and sentence count, is easy to calculate and relates quite well to reading age derived from the NFER test. Reading books in current use have been subjected to readability counts and for each book, an average reading age and range of reading age has been calculated. Instructors selecting reading material can therefore select books at an appropriate level for individual students. During the past few months educational publishers have produced a number of excellent readers. Most of these books are paper backs, are adult in appearance, and are written at a level that make them suitable for the majority of our students. In addition three reading books have been produced in the School. These books are written at the 8 years, 8½ years and 9 years reading level and apart from the large number of key words used, the readability has been controlled to avoid the wide fluctuations in level often found in commercially produced material.

*Spelling*

A result of the phenomenon of orthographic latency is that the general level of spelling is lower than that of reading, and it is only recently that a concerted effort has been made at SPE to teach spelling to all attainment levels. Latest innovations have aimed at improving this skill with the emphasis on work aimed at the student of poorest ability. A list of key words, military and civilian, has been compiled, and the student rote-learns words from this list. When he feels confident in his ability, he is tested, using a taped assignment which has a regular pattern and is based on the Skinnerean Stimulus - Response paradigm as follows:

| *Stimulus* | *Response* |
|---|---|
| word given | listen |
| a sentence including the word | listen |
| word given | spell |
| alphabetic spelling given | mark right or wrong |
| alphabetic spelling given | correct errors |

At the end of each taped assignment the student has a list of words correctly spelled, some of which he cannot spell correctly under test conditions. He then learns these words. Often students at this level need guidance in how to rote learn. Simple learning skills such as oral and written repetition, and the use of verbal mediators to aid recall are unknown to him and have therefore to be demonstrated. To consolidate the learning after each taped assignment has been successfully completed, the words are presented again as anagrams, which the student must solve. It is considered that this alphabetic approach in spelling complements the extended phonic-linguistic approach of the reading programmes.

Schonell graded word-lists, presented in book form or on cards, are used for all students with spelling difficulties. These range from spelling age 7 years to 12 years and are divided by years into six spelling groups. A recent pilot study experimented with taped assignments using these lists in the same way as key words, but because the length of word increases with spelling age, this became cumbersome at the three upper groups. For groups 1, 2 and 3 however, the taped assignment and anagrammed lists are proving a valuable aid.

In addition to Schonell and Key Word lists, a series of 32 assignments designed to teach simple spelling rules and generalisations has been produced. These assignments are audio visual and their application is confined to students with a reading age of 9½ and above. They are studied during the language laboratory time allocation and can be related to the reading programme. At the end of each assignment the student is required to complete a passage of dictation related directly to the rule or generalization taught. A new audio-visual spelling scheme is currently being introduced and it is hoped that the pilot study will be complete by May 1975.

Occasionally, the reading programmes are used as spelling programmes. The audio material is presented to a student who spells the word; the visual assignments provide the answers. Students who find this form of spelling exercise most useful are those who are competent in reading skills but who have not realised that words can be conveniently divided into meaningful units. By learning to spell units and recombining them to form new words, a great deal of time and effort can be saved.

*Communication skills*

A person's verbal associative network plays a prominent role in all forms of verbal learning, problem solving and conceptual thinking, and word associations reflect the quality and structure of the verbal environment to which a person has been exposed. Since these associations are important and basic to remediation in verbal learning, an effort is made to improve the often impoverished and idiosyncratic verbal networks of the students. Extreme weaknesses in relating words is a common failing and it is not unusual for a young man of British culture to be unable to give the opposite of 'up'. Exercises have been designed to illustrate the relationship between and among different words using antonyms, synonyms, homonyms and homophones. The aim of the exercises is to teach both the concept involved and related vocabulary of high frequency (Thorndike-Lorge) words. Nuttall's Dictionary of Antonyms and Synonyms has been a valuable aid in this aspect of the course.

Each instructor includes in the course an element of current affairs with some general information about the structure and function of the Army. The School also purchases daily newspapers on a scale of 1 to 3 students and every effort is made to encourage students to acquire a daily reading habit. Written and oral comprehension exercises are based on current news items and are designed to provide valuable information and strategies for searching for this information in daily newspapers.

The SPE is shortly to receive a Rover TV camera with video recording and play-back facility which will be used as a major aid in teaching oral communication - a vital skill in the Army today.

**Results**

Although many educationalists fight shy of statistical evaluation of intellectual attainment, the only reasonable way of commenting about the SPE course is whether or not students improve. In measuring success there are two separate criteria: the first in terms of improvements in the basic skills, the second whether the customer - the Army - is satisfied with our product. Suffice to say on this second point that it is the opinion of the large majority, if not all, Depot Commanders that the student returns to his Unit with greater potential and confidence than he had before the course.

In considering improvement in the basic skills an important qualification which must be made is that in addition to the problems of test reliability there are problems associated with course design. A student can study any combination of the skills taught depending on his individual weak-

nesses and quite obviously overall improvement will depend on the amount of time available for studying each particular area of skills. Since all students are included in the frequency distribution it will include some who spent 20 hours a week on a particular skill and others who perhaps did not study the skill at all.

The extent of improvement in mechanical reading ability is also related to the level at which work begins and a concrete example will indicate the problem of evaluation here. With the linguistic approach a student who progresses from an estimated 9 years to 9½ years must learn 51 grapheme/phoneme associations but from 9½ to 10 years there are only 15 associations. Certainly in practical terms it is not possible to be absolute. However, it could be argued that one student has four times the amount of work to do to make an equivalent improvement. A further complication stems from the fact that a student who has a low score on the reading tests will also have related difficulties with spelling and comprehension and it has been found necessary to lay down priorities at this level in order for remediation to be effective.

Some of the improvements shown are rather dramatic. In a sample of some 450, using the Holborn scale, there was an improvement of two years or more during the ten weeks course by 16% of the students, a few of these making a remarkable jump of four years. For those who commenced the course with a Reading Age of less than 7 years, the mean figure for Reading Age improvement was 1·4 years, those entering with a Reading Age of between 7 and 9 years improved by 1·66 years and those entering with a Reading Age over 9 years improved by 1·56 years.

Progress measured by the NFER test is slightly less than for our own mechanical reading test, while in spelling (Schonell) the advance is relatively slow and it is rare to find a jump of more than two years. Interestingly enough, the major change often comes in regard to their attitudes towards printed material, towards other people, towards those in authority, and, most important of all, towards their own abilities. Many become more co-operative, less suspicious, more teachable and generally happier and better adjusted people.

**Follow-up in field force units**

Whilst at Corsham the majority of students for the first time in their lives, see a purpose in education. They have made some progress, are encouraged by this and are then receptive to the idea of further study. But if there is no provision for follow-up after SPE the ex-student will

probably regress, will certainly lose his enthusiasm, and may well revert to the educational level at which he began the course. If the work of the School is to have full lasting value it is essential that arrangements should exist to take a man on from the level at which he finished the course.

To this end an improved follow-up system will shortly be implemented which, it is hoped, will ensure that progress initiated at SPE will be maintained. The system aims to provide RAEC officers working in Army Education Centres world-wide with relevant information on students in the form of a comprehensive course report. Additionally each Army Education Centre will be provided with a collection of the main instructional materials used by all SPE instructors and a brief to assist officers who have no experience of remedial education. The course report will comment on the student's performance in relation to the main instructional material and will include advice on further work related to that material.

**Liaison with civilian education authorities**

The Unit has a liaison role with civilian education authorities. Following the publication of the Russell Report, a number of organisations have been taking a much greater interest in the problem of remedial education for adults and the Unit is receiving an increasing number of requests for advice on materials and methodology and from groups and individuals wishing to visit SPE. Visitors' days are held regularly to satisfy this need and senior officers of the unit are frequently invited to speak to civilian in-service courses, conferences, seminars and the like.

**Conclusion**

After 30 years' experience the Army has gone some considerable way to producing an efficient system of diagnosis and a balanced programme of teaching in the remedial field. It is, perhaps, apposite at this juncture to enlarge on the philosophy of the balanced programme. It is of more than academic interest to determine the factors influential in success and we are well aware that we have a number working for us. The student is well motivated, well paid, well fed, well clothed, and well housed in warm, comfortable and clean surroundings and what seems to be important-living in a world of his peers instead of being the odd man out. Perhaps there are some lessons to be drawn from these factors. However, whilst appreciating the benefits of these peripheral influences, some claim is made for the success of the methods and for the skills of the staff. At the end of his course the student is undoubtedly more confident, he has been eased into his new environment with sympathy and understanding and hopefully has lost much of his antipathy towards education and the system as it exists today.

## Appendix A

### Oral communication skills

1. There is ample evidence from documented research which is supported by our experience at SPE that the majority of our students are particularly bad at most forms of oral work.

2. It has been clear for some time that the present course does little to remedy this deficiency. A major problem has been to describe the skills which should be taught. Although it is impossible to provide a definitive list the items listed below provide a satisfactory core around which work can begin.

3. To acquire some skill in oral communication the soldier must have:

   a. opportunities for talking and listening. He must have something to talk about in a stimulating environment that encourages fluency and variety in language.

   b. opportunity and encouragement to express thoughts, feelings, points of view and ideas.

   c. opportunity to gain clarity and articulation in speech.

   d. opportunity to gain precision and detail in the use of language.

4. He must develop his ability

   a. to talk with other soldiers.

   b. to talk with his officers and with civilians.

   c. to express his thoughts with clarity and fluency.

   d. to describe objects and events accurately in speech.

   e. to listen accurately.

   f. to understand the talk of others.

   g. to speak with confidence.

5. As he acquires the basic skills it is desirable that he should go on to develop more complex but connected abilities. He should be trained

   a. to gather information.

   b. to become aware of factual information.

   c. to distinguish fact and opinion.

   d. to distinguish evidence and proof.

   e. to appreciate different forms of evidence.

6. Our students generally fail in oral communication because

a. they fail to take account of the listener's knowledge about the subject under discussion.

b. they fail to realise that most subjects can be approached from a variety of perspectives.

c. they fail to classify the available information into a form that is easy to recall and subsequently to recount.

7. Opportunities to practise these skills can be provided by:

a. work with newspapers and periodicals, which has an additional advantage of helping to establish a regular reading habit.

b. discussion about the Army, its organisation and relationship with society.

c. discussions which indirectly provide much needed information about the organisation of our society.

d. reporting events, in particular, the educational visits.

**Appendix B**

**Readability levels of a selection of published materials**

| *Boosters* | Range | Average |
|---|---|---|
| The Secret Factory - W. C. H. Chalk | 9·2 - 12·9 | 11·5 |
| Escape from Bondage - W. C. H. Chalk | 9·7 - 12·0 | 11·5 |
| HMS Thing - W. C. H. Chalk | 11·0 - 13·1 | 11·9 |
| The Man from Mars - W. C. H. Chalk | 10·9 - 13·0 | 11·9 |
| Escape from Bondage - W. C. H. Chalk | 11·4 - 12·7 | 12·0 |
| Mask of Dust - W. C. H. Chalk | 11·5 - 13·3 | 12·3 |
| The Gomez Story - W. C. H. Chalk | 11·7 - 15·0 | 12·6 |
| *The Kennett Library* (*Simplified Classics*) | | |
| The Gorilla Hunters - R. M. Ballantyne | 7·0 - 9·5 | 8·2 |
| The Last of the Mohicans - J. Fennimore Cooper | 8·0 - 10·8 | 9·1 |
| Journey to the Centre of the Earth - Jules Verne | 8·5 - 10·6 | 9·6 |
| Ben-Hur - Lew Wallace | 8·5 - 10·5 | 9·6 |
| White Horizon - Douglas Liversedge | 8·0 - 11·4 | 10·5 |
| Two Eggs on my Plate - Oluf Reed Olsen | 10·0 - 12·0 | 11·0 |
| Cockleshell Heroes - C. E. Lucas Phillips | 7·5 - 13·9 | 11·6 |
| Exploration Fawcett - Lt. Col. P. H. Fawcett | 11·4 - 13·1 | 12·4 |
| The Green Beret - Hilary St. George Saunders | 11·7 - 13·7 | 12·5 |
| The Red Beret - Hilary St. George Saunders | 11·6 - 15·2 | 14·1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Data Books* (Developmental Approach Teaching Aid for retarded readers) | | |
| Dead Man's Trail - Peter Young | 6·0 - 8·3 | 7·2 |
| Once Upon a Space - Peter Young | 7·2 - 11·2 | 9·7 |
| *True Adventure Series* | | |
| Tales of Escape - Edward G. Jerome | 7·0 - 8·9 | 8·1 |
| *Trend Books* | | |
| A Real City Kid - Bettina Bird & Ian Falk | 6·0 - 6·6 | 6·2 |
| Old Bootleg - Rob Noske | 6·2 - 8·5 | 6·8 |
| Some Trannie that! - Lawrie Seawell | 6·9 - 8·1 | 7·7 |
| Old Cranky Jack - Roger Vaughan Carr | 8·0 - 11·3 | 10·0 |
| Dead Man's Float - Roger Vaughan Carr | 7·7 - 12·9 | 11·2 |
| *Bulls-Eye Series* | | |
| Doctor No - Ian Flemming | 7·3 - 9·8 | 7·5 |
| Red in the Morning - Dornford Yates | 7·8 - 10·3 | 8·8 |
| The Triffids - John Wyndham | 10·7 - 12·0 | 11·4 |

| | Range | Average |
|---|---|---|
| *Jets* | | |
| Blast off into Space - Henry Fleming | 6·5 - 7·3 | 6·8 |
| The Long Range Lorry Driver - John Eagle | 6·8 - 7·0 | 6·9 |
| Beat the Clock - Margaret Kamm | 6·5 - 7·4 | 7·0 |
| Sam Best - Report - James Stagg | 7·2 - 8·8 | 7·6 |
| Jeff Dickson - Cowhand - David Severn | 7·6 - 9·3 | 8·1 |
| Terry & Sid - Harry Fleming | 7·0 - 10·6 | 8·5 |
| Race Against the U Boats - Robert Bateman | 7·6 - 10·0 | 8·6 |
| Skid Pan - Robert Bateman | 7·2 - 10·3 | 8·6 |
| Two on the Trail - Irene Byers | 8·2 - 11·8 | 8·7 |
| The Four Aces - James Webster | 7·9 - 10·0 | 9·1 |
| *Topliners* | | |
| The Golden Orphans - Stuart Jackman | 7·4 - 10·8 | 9·6 |
| Louie's Lot - E. W. Hildick | 8·7 - 11·3 | 9·9 |
| Whizz Kid - Joan Tate | 8·5 - 12·4 | 10·6 |
| Birdy Jones - E. W. Hildick | 8·3 - 12·6 | 10·4 |
| Louis's SOS - E. W. Hildick | 10·2 - 12·4 | 10·9 |
| Birdy and the Group - E. W. Hildick | 9·7 - 12·3 | 11·1 |
| The Dragon in the Garden - Reginald Maddock | 10·6 - 12·4 | 11·1 |
| September Song - Vicky Martin | 10·6 - 12·9 | 11·7 |

| *Topliners* | Range | Average |
|---|---|---|
| Ghosts - Aidan & Nancy Chambers | 10·6 - 13·0 | 11·7 |
| Answering Miss Roberts - Christopher Leach | 7·5 - 13·1 | 11·7 |
| Clipper - Joan Tate | 8·3 - 13·8 | 11·7 |
| The Drum - Ray Pope | 9·3 - 15·5 | 11·7 |
| Birdy Swings North - E. W. Hildick | 10·0 - 14·5 | 11·8 |
| The Mysterious Rocket - Andre Massepain | 8·7 - 12·9 | 11·8 |
| The Contender - Robert Lipsyte | 10·5 - 15·2 | 11·9. |
| The Coral Island - R. M. Ballantyre | 11·4 - 12·9+ | 12·2+ |
| Night Fall - Joan Aitken | 9·0 - 14·8 | 12·6 |
| Scare Power - W. V. Butler | 9·6 - 15·5 | 12·9 |
| *Dragons* | | |
| Adventure in the Forgotten Valley - Glyn Frewer | 8·0 - 13·3 | 10·9 |
| Mission for Oliver - David Scott Daniell | 8·5 - 13·3 | 11·7 |
| Australian Adventure - Marie Workowsky | 10·8 - 14·1 | 12·3 |
| Martin Magnus, Planet Rover - William F. Temple | 9·3 - 14·2 | 12·3 |
| Through Russian Snows - G. A. Henty | 11·2 - 13·0 | 12·4 |
| Sea Wolves - Arthur Catherall | 10·6 - 14·0 | 12·4 |
| Forgotten Submarine - Arthur Catherall | 11·3 - 13·8 | 12·5 |
| Jackals of the Sea - Arthur Catherall | 11·3 - 14·3 | 12·6 |
| Ten Fathoms Deep - Arthur Catherall | 11·9 - 13·5 | 12·7 |
| In the Reign of Terror - G. A. Henty | 12·0 - 14·7 | 12·9 |
| The Three Musketeers - A. Duman | 12·5 - 14·2 | 13·3 |
| The Ladder of Snow - Showell Styles | 11·3 - 14·2+ | 13·0+ |
| Beau Geste - P. C. Wren | 12·9 - 14·0+ | 13·6+ |
| Beau Ideal - P. C. Wren | 12·2 - 14·0+ | 13·3+ |
| Beau Sabreur - P. C. Wren | 12·6 - 12·9+ | 12·8+ |

# Research and Adult Literacy Projects

**A. R. Hembrough**

The current concern about the degree of illiteracy which exists within our adult population has recently been recognised by the injection of a fairly substantial sum of money into the educational sphere, to be used specifically to investigate this problem. In view of the current and foreseeable financial climate, it is important that this and any future injection of financial aid should be deployed to maximum advantage. Whilst the most important immediate requirement is the training of instructors to staff the expected proliferation of adult literacy classes, once these classes have been established, there will remain a pressing need for research into the methods and techniques already implemented in order that, in the longer term, the most advantageous deployment of resources can be achieved. Of the many areas which merit research, four areas are picked out below for consideration, namely:

1. the development of instruments for the measurement and assessment of literacy levels in the adult population;
2. the relative effectiveness of the numerous types of teaching situations that already exist, and the methods they employ;
3. the development of the individual consequent upon his interaction with a particular type of teaching situation, and
4. the schemes for the training of instructors.

At the present time, there is a dearth of measuring instruments suitable for use with the adult population in this country. Most of the work carried out in this sector originated in the U.S.A. and is couched in the American idiom. Several instruments have been developed in the U.S.A., designed to measure basic literacy levels in adults,[1] and the need to produce English equivalents of such tests is of paramount importance. Alongside the development of these tests of basic levels, has emerged the functional literacy test. Functional literacy has been defined as a person's command of reading skills which enables him to perform his daily tasks successfully, and to exist within society with a satisfactory

degree of comprehension of the typical printed matter he encounters. Such tests were developed in the U.S. Armed Services when the mental aptitude standards for entrance were lowered, in order to measure the effectiveness of the remedial literacy training given to personnel to make them sufficiently literate to carry out the job successfully. The need for functional literacy tests within areas of industry in this country may well be greater than is imagined; the motor vehicle servicing industry is a specific example, where it is alleged that employees often do not have the basic literacy skills to understand the manufacturers' workshop manuals. The development of functional literacy tests for specific work areas or more generalised socio-economic environments might enable some minimum desirable standards in literacy levels in the adult population to be laid down.

Currently, within the adult literacy teaching programme now being implemented, there exist several widely different learning situations. They range from the very personal one teacher to one pupil situation to the more formal relatively large class situation. The success or otherwise of any particular learning situation will inevitably be judged using criteria which may well be those of expediency and economy rather than desirability, and the methods decided upon must offer maximum benefit and satisfaction to the participants, as well as satisfying economic criteria. In order that an arguable case might be presented on the appropriate occasion, there is an overwhelming need for methodological research to be carried out into the efficiency of the various learning situations in existence. The suggestion that criteria by which one judges should be desirable does not take us very far. We need very carefully to consider what these criteria should be. The most desirable criteria may well be expressed in terms of the recipient's change in behaviour or self concept and self esteem, and his subsequent standing in society. The type of criteria likely to be suggested will be those of cost-effectiveness and time factors and, whilst these are important factors, the more idealistic criteria must be considered. For example, it will be of no use to set up, at considerable expense, an efficient learning situation based on criteria of time and cost factors if the system has no appeal to prospective learners. Therefore, the use of 'market research' experiments must go hand in hand with any methodological research.

One of the most immediate pressing needs is for a supply of trained personnel who will staff the proposed increase in classes for adult illiterates. What constitutes a 'good' teacher of the adult illiterate may well be difficult to define, particularly so in terms of criteria which are measurable. The need for research into methods of training is obvious if one considers the cost factor involved alone. It will be expensive to train a teacher;

therefore, the training methods employed must be the best ones available. Decisions regarding what are the best methods and what criteria are to be employed can only be meaningful in the light of experience, and it is important that the experience should be both structured and evaluated.

In conclusion, one must not lose sight of the fact that much of the present effort is cast in the role of mopping-up operation, in that it is an attempt to rehabilitate the large numbers of adult illiterates who exist in our present society: the suggestion that prevention is better than cure holds good in the field of adult literacy. During the period of time in which we have these adults in our hands, there exists a great opportunity to research into such factors as social background, previous educational experiences, level of aspiration and so on, in an attempt to identify the basic characteristics of the adult illiterate and the root causes of their dilemma. In this way we might be able to inject the appropriate remedial measures at a much earlier stage, and to much greater effect.

**References**

1 *Burnett, R. W.: Adult Basic Reading Inventory.*
*McCarthy, J. J.: American Literacy Test.*

# The Public Library and The Adult Illiterate

**Raymond Astbury**

The Public Libraries Act of 1964 imposes a statutory obligation upon all library authorities to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for the whole community. The public librarian is, therefore, bound by law to cater for those who have special problems either because they are physically or mentally handicapped or because they are educationally or socially deprived. For many years a number of library authorities have provided books for children and adolescents who are backward readers. More recently library authorities, especially in London, have provided materials for adults with reading problems and for their tutors. Initially this provision was made in response to the needs of successive waves of immigrants. Leaving aside the needs of indigenous adult illiterates, consider for example the problems associated with the provision of library services in the London Borough of Brent which has an immigrant population approaching 30% in some wards, and out of a total population of 281,000 there are sizeable immigrant communities of Africans, West Indians, Asian Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, Poles, Cypriots, as well as 22,500 Irish immigrants.[1] In recent years library provision in London for adult illiterates and semi-literates, and for their tutors, has been influenced by the activities of the British Association of Settlements, the Cambridge House Literacy Scheme, and its counterpart in north London, the Beauchamp Lodge Scheme.

The Library Association, too, has influenced the nature of the provision made for the educationally disadvantaged; its Sub-Committee on Books for Slow Learners was instrumental, with F. A. Thorpe of the Ulverscroft Foundation, in promoting the publication of the Trigger series of books for backward readers. The Library Advisory Council for England and Wales, a body which has had and will have in the future much influence on the ethos of the public library, has recently set up a working party on library services for the disadvantaged, though at the moment this body is still considering its terms of reference. The Department of Education and Science will provide finance for a research project concerning library provision for the disadvantaged.

The Library Association sponsored a conference of librarians and remedial teachers held on April 23, 1974, at which the delegates in their plenary discussions recommended that public librarians should consider the following series of priorities in framing their future policies for combating illiteracy:

1. the public library should be the focal point for organising voluntary tutoring in conjunction with other appropriate agencies, and if librarians are to develop effectual user-based schemes to meet the needs of the socially and educationally disadvantaged, special courses for librarians should be provided through local training schemes, and library schools should include in their curricula more adqeuate coverage than at present of those themes concerned with the social context of the public library and services to the underprivileged;

2. library authorities should provide both in libraries and in other places a wide range of reading books, work books, word games, tapes, slides and filmstrips to help the illiterate, and each branch library should house a collection of books for the semi-literate borrower and multiple copies of the basic textbooks on the teaching of reading for the use of volunteer tutors; library staffs should know where to refer illiterates who seek help and they should compile up-to-date lists of all sources of tuition and aid for the adult illiterates in the locality;

3. in-service training should ensure that every librarian and library assistant is sensitive to the needs of illiterates and is sympathetic and positive in his attitude to their problems; there is a need to promote the production of more resource materials for teaching adults;

4. tutors should be invited to bring their classes on visits to the library both during and after normal opening hours;

5. at local level there should be more liaison between remedial teachers and librarians;

6. at national level there should be more liaison between library, educational and publishing bodies, and in particular publishers should be encouraged to develop projects such as audio books for illiterates.[2]

The Public Library Research Group (PLRG), which was established in 1970 under the aegis of the London and Home Counties Branch of the Library Association but which is now an independent body, sponsored a conference held at the Library Association's headquarters on April 23, 1975, the aim of which was to inform public librarians about the govern-

ment-financed national campaign which has been launched to help illiterates, to inform them of what their colleagues are already doing in co-operation with literacy schemes, to give information about the work of the Cambridge House Scheme and the activities of the British Association of Settlements, and to publicise the BBC's television and radio programmes intended to aid adult illiterates and their tutors which are planned to start later this year. Three points of importance which emerged from this workshop should be stressed: many public librarians are insufficiently aware at the present time of what their colleagues in other library authorities are doing; there is a danger of unnecessary duplication and overlapping in the provision of materials and services within authorities; and most important of all, there is a pressing need for the publication of new books on themes of interest to adults which have been written specifically for adults with a limited reading ability. On this last point, it seems certain that commercial publishing houses will not finance the publication of this type of book unless they are assured of their market in advance of publication. There is, therefore, an urgent need for librarians, educationalists and publishers to come together at national level to sort out a scheme which would ensure that the publication of such books is economically viable.

A working party set up by the PLRG is currently investigating the problems associated with the provision of services to adult illiterates by public libraries. Apart from sponsoring the conference discussed in the previous paragraph, the Group was instrumental in promoting a new teaching pack, has undertaken a survey of public library provision for adult illiterates, and was responsible for ensuring that a recent issue of the library journal *New Library World*[3] was devoted exclusively to articles dealing with the theme of adult illiteracy. One of these articles presents the views of Liz Ainley, who was until recently the Assistant Organiser of the Manchester Council for Voluntary Service Literacy Project, about how public libraries can best help volunteer tutors and their students. She reveals that many tutors have complained that they have sometimes had to wait months, usually long after they have started to teach their students, for the books they have ordered through public libraries. Similarly, booksellers and publishers have too often provided a very slow service. She advocates that a selection of appropriate reading materials for semi-literates should be made available at several service points within each library authority, though not necessarily in every branch library. These books should not be housed in the children's library, nor should they be shelved in a stackroom accessible only to the library staff and available only on request. Moreover, these books should not be labelled too obviously as items specifically for those with a low-reading

ability. On the other hand, they should not be *hidden* so successfully in the library stock that a trained librarian is needed to discover them. Library staffs should be trained to know where these books are located in the library, and librarians should compile for tutors frequently updated lists of books graded by reading ages. More controversially, perhaps, she suggests that the children's librarian may be the person best qualified to give advice to tutors on choosing books on special interests and topics, with the right reading age, from all sections of the library.[4] Personally, I believe that selected members of library staffs should be given special training to provide this service. Ideally, the librarian responsible for providing this service should also be a tutor of adult illiterates. Such is the case in, for example, Havering Public Library, where the librarian responsible for advising tutors about appropriate books for adult students is also in charge of library services for slow readers. In addition all the senior librarians have attended lectures given by the organisers of the Cambridge House Literacy Scheme, and several have also attended courses on how to teach adult illiterates to read. In some libraries staff working parties have been set up to track down and list titles which have a high interest value for adults with a low reading ability. It is true that in many libraries the children's librarian has been given the responsibility of providing a service for adult semi-literates and their tutors. Nevertheless, just as it has been recognised that school teachers are not necessarily the people best suited to teach adult illiterates, it may be that the children's librarian is not invariably the type of librarian best suited to fulfil the role of helping tutors and students. Indeed, in relation to the problem of how librarians should cope with the newly literate adults passed on to the library by their tutors, one London librarian expressed the view to me that 'the most important aspect psychologically would seem to be that on no account should they be referred to the children's libraries for suitable material'.

To return to the suggestions made by Liz Ainley concerning the ways in which librarians might support literacy schemes: she raises a number of points to which librarians should give careful consideration. In the unlikely event of a student venturing into a library on his own and identifying himself to the staff, he should be treated in a generally helpful and friendly manner, given assistance to complete application forms, and introduced to the layout of the library. She avers that when leaflets have been left in quantity in public libraries to advertise for new recruits who are willing to train as tutors the response has been encouraging. She also recommends the use of bookmarks, posters, library magazines and other library publications as a means of advertising local literacy schemes. Apart from educating public opinion and encouraging potential tutors to come

forward to receive training, this kind of publicity may encourage the friends or relations of an adult illiterate, if they know about his problem, to tell him where he can obtain help. Because there is such a shortage of easy reading material, libraries should provide a basic collection, though because library resources are so stretched at the present time, she feels that it is probably not possible for them to supply in quantity non-book materials such as games, flashcards, kits, workcards, and other aids. However, she stresses how useful it would be if libraries were willing to provide tape recorders and cassettes on loan so that students could be given exercises to do as homework. Ideally, she suggests, books borrowed by tutors for use with students should be issued on extended loan, since a loan period of, say, one month is too short a time when a student is at the early stages of learning to read, and when he only sees his tutor once a week. Finally, she advocates that library accommodation should be made available to enable tutors to meet those students who cannot receive tuition in their homes, for use by the reading clubs in which students are still taught on a one-to-one basis but meet at a central location instead of tutors having to go to the students' homes, and to enable tutors to meet together to discuss mutual problems or to view exhibitions.[5]

What are public libraries doing at the present time to support the literacy schemes? The PLRG working party has circularised each of the 116 library authorities in England and Wales asking for information about their current services for adult illiterates. 83 replies were received, and 52 of the authorities were already providing services, while another 20 expressed a willingness to do so if guidance were given by an outside agency. But 11 authorities admitted that they had no plans to provide services either now or in the future.[6] Earlier this year I conducted a mini-survey of public libraries by sending a *questionnaire* to all the London library authorities and to all the library authorities in the north-west. I was particularly interested to gather information on four points:

1 to discover how many librarians were acting as tutor-counsellors of adult illiterates;

2 to obtain an outline of the provision being made by libraries;

3 to learn of plans being laid to expand and intensify services as a result of the government finance being provided through the National Institute for Adult Education to further the campaign against illiteracy, and in anticipation of the increased demand for tuition as a consequence of the proposed BBC programmes;

4 to find out if libraries were developing special procedures to deal with those newly-literate adults who might be referred to them by tutors.

It was not possible to find out how many librarians are acting as tutors, since many chief librarians do not know if members of their staffs are undertaking this role. All one can say is that it is obvious that there are many librarians who are doing this work in their leisure time, if not officially through the library service during working hours. Where librarians are also teachers, their respective library authorities do receive useful feedback information which helps to ensure that suitable material is selected and provided by those authorities. Some librarians expressed the view that it should not be part of a librarian's role to act as a tutor, though they do advise members of their staffs to attend courses put on by the organisers of local literacy schemes so that they are acquainted with the problems of dealing with illiterates. Other librarians advocate that their staffs do receive training as voluntary tutors, and reports so far suggest that those librarians who have a special commitment to this work do make ideal tutors. A report from one librarian in the north-west emphasises the stresses and strains that tutors may experience: two young female librarians on his staff who were tutoring two young male illiterates found that the emotional problems were so difficult to cope with that they ceased to undertake this work. A radical proposal has been put forward in the London Borough of Lambeth, where library services are integrated with amenity services and a librarian is the overall Director, to establish a 'Read Shop' as an integral part of the literacy scheme in the Borough, with a Tutor/Librarian/Co-ordinator in charge whose responsibilities will include selecting materials, putting prospective students into direct and immediate contact with suitable tutors, liaising with existing literacy groups and helping to set up new ones, and doing some on-the-spot tutoring and counselling.

What services are libraries providing at present? Here one must generalise because the nature and extent of the provision varies from authority to authority. In the main, librarians consider that their role should be to provide information and advisory services as well as books and sometimes other materials for both tutors and students. Librarians are well represented on the management committees for adult literacy projects and they are concerned to establish and maintain close contacts with literacy groups. The range of services at present being provided includes making available texts for tutors and easy readers for their students, both in libraries and in other centres, advising tutors about suitable books, arranging exhibitions and giving talks to tutors at locally arranged conference, organising class visits to libraries at times when they are closed to the general public to introduce students to the public library and to show them where books appropriate to their needs are shelved, and providing publicity for literacy projects by means of posters, leaflets and bookmarks.

What of the future? The overwhelming majority of the replies which I received to my *questionnaire*, and over ninety per cent of the libraries I contacted did reply, indicated that librarians intend to intensify and expand their services in response to the launching of the government-financed literacy campaign and in anticipation of the effects of the BBC programmes. A number of libraries have now established working parties to evaluate the services currently being offered and to evolve a strategy for future development. In the London Borough of Islington, for example, a discussion paper is being prepared which will be debated by Council members and library staff, covering topics such as proposals for enlarging and broadening the bookstock, transferring titles from the junior to the adult library, establishing referral points for prospective students, providing library accommodation for teaching purposes, designing a staff training programme to ensure that the special problems of adult illiterates are understood, considering methods of discovering and encouraging those in need and of recruiting tutors, and discussing ways of helping the newly-literate to maintain the reading habit. It should be stressed, however, that some librarians feel strongly that the efforts so far made to help adult illiterates are as yet still in the experimental stage and that there is a need for more exchange of information between librarians, and between librarians and others engaged in this work.

Willingness is one thing; wherewithal is another. In March this year the Information Officer of the Library Association sent a *questionnaire* to all chief librarians of public libraries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to obtain information about the likely effects of the current economic situation on the library service. An interim report has been issued based on the 107 replies received so far.[7] It is evident that the development of the new library services established as a result of local government organisation will be seriously curtailed. The staff establishment in some libraries has been reduced, but more seriously many librarians are having to delay filling vacancies. This means that, though at present closures of service points, for whole or half days or in the evenings, are in general being avoided, curtailments of services may well become inevitable. For example, four authorities reported that they have had to suspend services to housebound readers. Most librarians reported that they had received an inflation allowance which will enable them to keep pace with rising book prices over the next year, but some libraries which had their bookfunds cut last year have not had these cuts restored.

Charges to readers have been increased: fines, reservations, gramophone records, picture loans have all been affected, sometimes by as much as one hundred per cent. Some authorities reported reductions in the funds for cleaning, servicing, and so forth, but the most serious long-term result of the present economies will be that much needed new

buildings and extensions to present buildings will be deferred. Inevitably, therefore, librarians will be obliged to make some agonising reappraisals of priorities regarding the services which they offer. Some authorities may be willing to provide finance to expand provision of library services for adult literacy projects; others will demand that the librarian reduces services in other areas to finance services to adult illiterates. How strongly chief librarians feel that it is a primary responsibility of the public library to play a role in the campaign against illiteracy will obviously be a vital factor. Of course, as some librarians have stressed to me, it should be remembered that government financial aid is directed to education departments whose responsibility it is to tackle the problem of adult illiteracy. Nevertheless, some of this money will need to be allocated to libraries if they are to be expected to expand book provision and other services for adult literacy programmes.

How should librarians deal with the newly-literate adults referred to the public library by their tutors? At the moment, some librarians regard this as a future problem, since they have so far had few such referrals, and they do not expect to have more until, at the earliest, the BBC television series is well advanced. Some librarians believe that most of those attending reading classes who will acquire basic reading skills will never become users of the public library. In other words, the problem does not really exist. But, many librarians have referred consideration of this question to the working parties which have been established in a number of library authorities to examine all aspects of the service to adult illiterates. Some librarians have already devised systems which are intended to ease the new reader into using the public library.

Most are agreed that in the first instance the student should visit the public library with his tutor so that he can borrow suitable books while still retaining his 'anonymity'. In some libraries the tutor is advised to introduce his student to the Readers Advisor whom he is expected to contact on future solo, and inevitably traumatic, expeditions to the library. In some larger library systems a number of librarians act in this capacity as personal guides, and the new reader is informed before his first visit to contact one or other of these named members of staff. Thus, he need never identify himself to the library staff in general. Some librarians, however, are still referring new readers to the staff in the children's library, even though many librarians believe that this is a disastrous procedure. However carefully librarians have laid plans in co-operation with tutors to receive new readers, there have been instances when librarians have been informed by tutors that a student is about to make his first lone visit to the library, only to find that he never arrives. The student's first visit to a library on his own presents him with a problem as great as when he first decided to seek help from a tutor.

Related to the problem of introducing the new reader to the library is the question of evolving a system which enables him to identify suitable books on the shelves without it being obvious to other readers that the people who select such books are disadvantaged. Some libraries do label books: in Camden the bookstock for new literates bears the national literacy logo, so do all the branches housing these books, and in future the library guides to this material will also carry the same symbol; in Havering a collection of easy readers is available at all service points, and these books are labelled with coloured stickers on their spines - red for the reading age 6 to 7½, blue for the reading age 7½ to 9, and green for the reading age of 9+. However, some librarians are opposed to book-labelling, and they suggest as alternatives to this method either that all new readers should be taught to use the booklists of appropriate titles so that they are able to find the items they need for themselves when they visit a library or that they continue to refer to named members of the staff for personal guidance. The possibility of embarrassing and of deterring the new reader is lessened when bulk loans of suitable books are deposited in centres outside the library where the student-reader may feel more at ease.

This last point leads on naturally to a brief consideration of the changing role of the public library in modern society. A growing number of librarians are becoming convinced that it is only by mounting 'outreach' programmes that the library will be able to help the educationally and socially disadvantaged in urban communities. In this country Lambeth Public Library has pioneered this approach by taking books, toys, games and story-telling into a wide range of situations where people meet socially, including pubs, clubs, clinics, factories, swimming baths and public parks. The library authority in the London Borough of Brent is about to inaugurate the first of three special centres with a bias towards the needs of the disadvantaged. The ground floor of the centre will contain meeting rooms, a public hall, a coffee lounge, a licensed bar, an advice bureau, a family planning clinic, a law centre, a library and, possibly a creche. The upper floor will house adult education facilities, including a language laboratory, offices for the Neighbourhood English Classes Organiser and for the DES Language Training Scheme for immigrants, and premises for the Co-ordinator of the Literacy Scheme.[8] Experiments of this nature are not restricted to London. In Cleveland, for example, two factory libraries have been established by the library authority. The most recent one is in the Meridian Hosiery factory, Middlesborough, where a library session is held on alternative Mondays, covering three lunch breaks, the first of which is taken by young mothers and their children, the latter being provided with a well-equipped creche

while the mothers are working. In these contexts the library is de-institutionalised and books become a familiar part of the environment.

Inevitably, there are those librarians who fear that 'outreach' programmes of this kind will involve librarians in a loss of professional identity. Moreover, some librarians oppose these approaches because they believe that librarians should not be encroaching on the roles of educationalists and social workers. But can librarians afford to adopt a passive role? The basic problem has been presented in these terms: 'Much can be done by improving education but what will happen if we fail to reverse the trend away from reading? Can people be expected to retain literacy as a functional skill if they do not also maintain and improve it as a leisure skill?[9] If a large proportion of the next generation of adults are not 'readers', librarians may well be left contemplating their own professional skills. Today, the public librarian would seem to be trying to chart a course between, on the one hand, the Scylla of fearing to lose his identity by closely involving himself with the work of educationalists and social workers and, on the other, the Charybdis of not doing so and therefore restricting his role to that of an agent who acquires books and audio-visual material for specialists who alone deal with the readers and potential readers who cannot be persuaded, or who are not able, to use libraries.

The campaign against adult illiteracy will obviously have to be sustained over many years. How can the student-librarian of today be equipped to make a positive contribution to this work in the future? It would be both arrogant and ineffectual to attempt to legislate for all schools of librarianship, but in Liverpool we have laid our plans. This year we have submitted to the Council for National Academic Awards proposals for a three year degree course, leading to the award of a BA (Hons) in Librarianship, which contains a compulsory course of one term's duration dealing with reading problems and the teaching of reading skills. Additionally, those students who opt for a two-year component, 'The Librarian and the Community: Public Library Services for Adults', will cover themes concerned with the social and library context with special reference to services for the disadvantaged, including the adult illiterate.

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# The Response from Further Education

**V. J. Sparrow**

The further education system in this country is characterised by its ability to respond promptly and pragmatically to demands made on it. The essential need for literacy having been re-emphasised, therefore, the next few years will see a significant development in the adult literacy provision made by local education authorities through their networks of further education colleges and adult education centres.

These networks lend themselves to such a development for they are in close touch with the communities they serve and possess considerable resources of teaching and supporting staff, equipment, and materials. However, because adult literacy has only recently become a matter of major concern, special efforts are necessary at the outset to establish suitable forms of organization and staff training, and to develop appropriate methods and materials for teaching and testing.

The £1 million made available by the Government during the financial year 1975/6 is intended to encourage such efforts, and there is evidence that local education authorities are responding with enthusiasm. The result, therefore, is likely to be a range of projects of considerable variety which when evaluated will provide the bases for further, and more systematic, developments.

Since the funding of continued development is difficult and uncertain, those who are responsible for submitting proposals for the development of adult literacy provision in their local education authorities will be looking for ways of keeping costs down and of relating this provision firmly to mainstream further and secondary education. In particular, they will wish to ensure the sound training of staff, to promote the effective use of volunteer tutors, and to introduce appropriate test and self-instruction materials, for these are perhaps the keys to cost-effectiveness at the present time.

When considering questions of cost, however, it is important to bear in mind that what is learned and developed as a result of the present adult literacy campaign will find application in other areas of further education provision. There will be obvious applications to other disadvantaged groups, but more general benefits will also result, including those which will be derived from the strengthening of the links between further education and other local services, and from the better appreciation by all further education teachers of the importance of the levels of literacy of their students and of the "readability" of the learning materials they employ.

The papers in this collection are characterised by the problems they identify rather than the solutions they offer, since each, in its turn, raises issues facing the providers of tuition for adult illiterates. If the result of this publication is to move us from blind optimism to a state of some awareness, then we should be grateful to the authors. Certainly, we must first identify specific problems and formulate meaningful questions before we search for solutions. This is the stage in which we are now engaged. Bolton College of Education (Technical) looks forward to continuing to play its part in the creation of answers and further questions and, through its Extension Studies Unit, the dissemination of ideas through future courses, conferences and publications.

## The Contributors

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| F. Ansell | Principal, South Trafford College of Further Education. |
| R. Astbury | Principal Lecturer, Department of Library and Information Services, Liverpool Polytechnic. |
| Joan Boyes | Adult Literacy Development Officer, Extension Studies Unit, Bolton College of Education (Technical). |
| W. H. Butt | Assistant Director (Further Education), City of Liverpool. |
| K. Dixon | Head of Extension Studies Unit, Bolton College of Education (Technical). |
| R. Gray | Area Adviser for Adult Education, Lancashire County Council. |
| A. R. Hembrough | Senior Lecturer (Ed. Research) Bolton College of Education (Technical). |
| R. J. Kedney | Adviser for Further and Adult Education, Bolton Metropolitan Borough. |
| Elaine McMinnis | Head of Department of Adult Studies, Newton-le-Willows College of Further Education. |
| J. L. Nicholson | Principal, Newton-le-Willows College of Further Education. |
| Laverne Pearson | Principal Lecturer (Psychology), Bolton College of Education (Technical). |
| J. G. Peden | Senior Tutor-Organiser Adult Education, Victoria Park Centre, North Trafford College of Further Education. |
| J. Robinson | Area Principal for Adult Education, Farnworth and Little Lever, Bolton. |
| D. Selby | County Senior Adviser for Adult Education, Lancashire County Council. |
| V. J. Sparrow | Director, Bolton College of Education (Technical). |
| Prof. M. D. Stephens | Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham. |
| Jenny Stevens | Further Education Officer (Adult Literacy) BBC. |
| Connie Timpson | Literacy Counsellor, South Trafford College of Further Education. |